Final Boy

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Final Boy

by Devereauxs_Disease

Summary

The sole survivor of a terrifying massacre, Will Graham meets a mysterious man who offers him a chance to slaughter those who prey on the weak. Will a life as Hannibal Lecter's protege be enough for Will? Or is he going to want more than a lifetime of hunting the hunters?

OR: A reworking of the movie Final Girl, with a Hannigram twist.

Notes

OK, so, this chapters starts out with a lot of death, it's a slasher film, after all...so be forewarned that there is some violence and some nasty language ahead, but not for long - Hannibal doesn't stand for that kind of thing.
My Halloween story that ballooned into a giant multi-chapter fic - what even am I doing?
As always, thanks go to Gwilbers for reading this and fixing all my nutty mistakes.

Happy Halloween, everyone!

The Killer in The Woods

Bev had been the first to die.

When Matthew and Tobias came out of the woods, Will and Bev had initially offered them some of the beer they had stolen from the cooler outside the Circle K. The two seniors hadn't been invited to their little bonfire in the woods, but that didn't mean Will and his friends weren't willing to share. It got weird when Matthew and Tobias just stared at the group, smiling silently. Will felt something cold slither up his spine. He'd tried to tell Bev, but she was inching away from him and toward her backpack, where she kept her car keys. Jimmy had been the one to move first, jumping off his log and offering Tobias a s'more with a friendly smile.

Tobias smacked the cracker out of Jimmy's hand, grabbing the smaller boy and punching him in the face. Matthew winked at Will before joining in, falling on top of Jimmy with a snarl.

Bev screamed for them to stop. Will had begged her to run, to go back to where they had parked the car, drive until they found a signal and call the cops – but she had shaken him off when he tried to pull her away from the boys. Bev charged them, grabbing a log from the fire and smacking Tobias with it.

Will had moved to help, but Matthew had been faster, pulling a bowie from his belt and jamming it in between Bev's ribs as she raised the log to hit Tobias again. Bev choked, the log falling from her hand. Tobias kicked out, sending her flying back toward the flames. She had looked up from her spot in the middle of the muddy soil, blood already flecking her lips and shouted for Will to run.

So, he did.

Will took off down the trail. At least, he had thought it was the trail. He hadn't been paying attention when he'd followed Jimmy and Bev from the parking lot, too busy complaining that there were no bars this far into the woods. Bev had grabbed his phone and –

FUCK

Bev still had his phone…and the fucking car keys. Will froze looking around the woods. Could he even make it out on foot? The highway was west, he knew that, but what fucking direction was west? He couldn't even see the stars – not that he'd know what to do with them if they were visible.

His chest was tightening. Will could feel panic prickling his skin and making his breathing labored. He was fucked. Well and truly fucking fucked.

It was cold, he was alone, and he had no idea how to get out of here.

The sound of a branch snapping drew his focus. He wasn't alone. Matthew fucking Brown, and probably Tobias were somewhere, probably nearby. Will had to get away.

Will took off heading downhill, it was the best he could do for now. He'd figure out how to get out of here once he put enough distance between him and the two boys chasing him. He had just about convinced himself he was going to live through this when something connected with his chest and all the air left his lungs.

Gasping Will tried to fight off the weight atop him only to feel it move. He squinted, his bleary vision picking up Matthew's small smile before hands wrapped around his throat and the world went black.

The hiss of a beer cracking open brought Will back to consciousness. He was back at the little camp site he'd set up with his friends. He could smell the burning wood and the acrid scent of melted plastic. Someone must have kicked the bag of marshmallows into the fire during the scuffle with Jimmy.

Will tried to move but found his hands bound behind his back. He traced the edges of his restraints, it felt like a belt. He tested the ties again and couldn't budge them.

"I just want a fucking turn." The leaves near him crunched.

Will froze, trying to make his breathing even so Matthew and Tobias wouldn't know he'd woken up.

"No. He's fucking mine." That was Matthew's voice, Will was sure. He'd been in Will's AP History class and was always asking to borrow a pen. "I told you the bitch and the fag were yours."

"She's fucking dead, Matty, what the fuck am I going to do with a dead girl?"

"Same thing you'd do to a live one, man." Matt laughed. "It's not like her pussy's gonna close once she's dead."

There was a small fracas beside Will's head, a leaf kicked up over his eyes. "I want to hear him scream."

"Oh, he's gonna." A hand ran over Will's ass, he stayed limp. "Gonna split him in two. He'll be moaning for it before I'm fucking done with him."

The hand was snatched away from Will's ass. "Then give me a fucking turn."

"Tell ya what, Toby," Matthew stood, boot hitting Will's side. "You can have him when I'm done."

"It's no fun when they're dead, Matty."

“Fine. We’ll knock his teeth out and you can fuck his throat.” Matthew sighed. “Where the fuck did we leave our beer? I’m not drinking any more of their shitty Natty Lites.”

“Hung it by our perch while we were watching them.”

“Come on,” A smacking sound, before someone clapped their hands together. “Let’s get it before pretty boy comes to.”

Will waited until the sound of leaves crunching was barely audible before he started to sob. He was going to die and die ugly. He let his mind wander. Let himself see it all. They had planned this for weeks. Learned where Will and his friends hung out, picked a good place to attack them. They’d probably watched them get drunk and eat s’mores around this very fire a few times before. While it had been Matthew’s idea – it hadn’t taken much to convince Tobias, probably just pointing out Bev in the hallways had been enough.

It had gone wrong, sure, but they were still learning. This was a practice. A trial run for when they started to find victims in the city, after graduation. No one would miss some bayou trash and his weird friends if they went missing. Hell, Will’s own father probably wouldn’t report him missing for a good week. They were the perfect victims, carefully chosen and hunted.

But Will had one advantage – Matthew and Tobias were sexual sadists. He’d read the term in one of the criminology books Bev was always studying. They wanted to fuck him, to make it hurt, to hear him scream and beg before they finally ended it. It was the only thing keeping Will alive right now, and it meant they might be stupid enough to waste some time before coming back to him – draw out the pain and fear as much as possible. He had time, and time meant he could get free.

Will shook his head, clearing it of his visions of blood and pain. Will was going to die with his friends, that much he knew in his bones, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t take one or both of these animals out with him.

Grabbing onto his thumb, Will yanked. Pain flared in his left hand and he lost his nerve, releasing his thumb. He took a deep breath. He could do this. He had to do this.

Gripping his left thumb again, Will jerked at the digit. This time, he ignored the pain clawing up his arm, increasing the pressure as much as he could until he heard a *pop*. His arm felt like he had rolled into the fire, burning nerves throbbing as Will tried to draw air into his lungs.

He felt around with the fingers on his right hand. His thumb hung loosely in his left hand, at a funny angle to the rest of his fingers. He pressed it, gritting his teeth to seal the scream in his throat. The thumb folded into his palm neatly, allowing him to slip his left arm from the belt.

Once free, Will scrambled to sit up. He frantically looked around him, trying to find someplace to hide and something to use as a weapon. He moved to the fire, reduced to smoldering ash from inattention, and tried to grab a log. Without his left hand to stabilize his

grip, he couldn't hold onto the wood and swing it with any surety. Tears welled in his eyes as he tried to force his left thumb to grip. It was useless, they'd knock it out of his hands.

A small glimmer caught his eye and Will turned. Bev lay in a heap, Jimmy contorted beneath her, the blade of the bowie knife still in her ribs winking in the low light. Will ran to Bev, he hadn't seen the extent of the damage done to Jimmy yet and he gagged when his friend's ruined face came into focus.

"I'll get them." Will promised, gripping the knife hilt and tugging it free. Bev shifted, falling half onto his lap. Will took a moment to brush the hair from her face. "I'll fucking kill them all."

It took Tobias and Matthew a few moments to notice Will wasn't where they left him. He smiled when he heard them panic, sniping at each other about checking the ties before going to get the beer. They agreed to split up, Matthew heading down the hill again and Tobias checking the trail to the north.

Matthew tore down the slope, branches and leaves snapping in his wake. Tobias moved more carefully, trying to make as little noise as possible as he crept toward the trail head where Will was waiting.

Covered in leaves and laying low at the base of a tree, Will barely breathed as he heard Tobias' slow steps. Something electric flowed through Will's body. He couldn't feel the pain in his left hand, he could only feel the hammering in his heart, the prickling sensation on his skin, the excitement at the base of his spine as Tobias moved closer and closer. Will's breath came in soft pants, and he realized in the back of his mind that what he was feeling felt like fun.

Tobias stepped by his head and Will struck, slashing the blade along Tobias' ankle and watching as the older boy buckled and fell to the ground. He cried out as Will climbed on top of him, raising the knife high. The last thing Tobias saw in this shitty world was Will Graham's smiling face as the boy drove a bowie knife into his gut.

Will kept stabbing, feeling a surge of energy pooling in his head. He didn't stop until he heard a click and felt metal pressed to the base of his ear.

"Get the fuck up."

Will kept a grip on the knife but did as Matthew said.

Matthew was considerably paler, but looked furious as he stood before Will, gun in hand. "I wanted to do this fucking slow, but I guess I can improvise."

Will clutched the knife tighter, if he was going to die, he would at least make Matthew bleed as he did. He could do this, he just had to be fast.

As if he could read Will's mind, Matthew backed up a few steps, out of range of Will and the blade. "You fucking tease. This is your fault. If you had just fucking stayed where I left you- You probably would've fucking liked it. I see the way you are, the way you look at me. I wanted-"

A man stepped from behind a tree. He grabbed Matthew's arm and twisted. The gun fell from Matthew's fingers and to the ground before the boy could even cry out in pain. Disarmed, the man shifted behind Matthew and Will caught a glimpse of heavy mechanics' coveralls and old work boots.

Matthew swung at the intruder only to have his fist caught. The man turned Matthew to face Will, pulled out a blade and drew it across Matthew's struggling neck.

Will opened his mouth to scream but began to choke when Matthew's blood hit his tongue and ran down his throat. The man holding Matthew's still spasming body cocked his head, studying Will as the boy spat out the remnants of Matthew Brown.

"It's best to keep your mouth closed."

Will looked up, squinting. "What?"

"When an artery is severed, it's best to keep your mouth closed." The man pulled Matthew closer, sniffing him before lofting the body in the air to shake. "I don't detect anything that can't be treated with a round of antibiotics on him, but in the future it's best to avoid swallowing blood unless you know where the person has been."

The man dropped Matthew's body, it fell in a heap at Will's feet. Glancing at the man before him, Will noted that the coveralls he wore had *Graham* stitched over the heart. Something cold and satisfied coiled in Will's stomach at that knowledge. He nudged Matthew's corpse with his foot. "The future?"

"Yes." The man produced a handkerchief from the pocket of his coveralls. It should have been white. At one point, Will was sure it had been. But now it was the color of mud and rust, only fleeting spots of antique white along the edges. Blood. Will realized. The thing was covered in old blood. The man seemed not to mark Will's gasp, too busy carefully wiping at his blade.

"So…I have a future?" Will took a deep breath. He could feel his eyes prickling, but he would not cry and he'd damn sure not beg. He'd lived to see the death of Matthew Fucking Brown, and if he died minutes later, well, maybe that was just fine.

"I'm offering you one, yes." The man pocketed the soiled handkerchief. The knife he kept out, twirling it between nimble fingers.

"As what?" Will watched the blade dance. The hilt was a white color, with what looked like intricate carvings. Will thought of the scrimshaw blades some of the older dock workers carried when his dad was still working.

"As a partner." The man sheathed his blade and extended a hand. "Hannibal Lecter."

“Will, uh, Will Graham.” Will took Hannibal’s hand and felt himself tugged to his feet. He was trembling all over as the larger man walked around him, inspecting.

“I’ll need to set that thumb now,” Hannibal said, still circling. “But after, I think perhaps we should get something warm in you. There’s a diner near the park entrance.”

“Harlan’s.” Will felt like he was hearing everything in a cavern, echoing around his brain. “I worked there this summer.”

“Do they serve coffee?”

Will nodded.

Hannibal smiled. At least, Will thought that’s what he did. His mouth had done a funny little tick up that seemed to indicate amusement. “Wonderful. We can get you warmed up and discuss my proposal.”

Will blinked. He was about to agree when the man stepped closer and grabbed his left hand. The pain was immense. He felt a firm hand fall on his wrist seconds before his thumb jerked high in the air.

There was an audible pop. Will had three blissful seconds of shock before the pain returned and nearly knocked him off his feet. Hannibal kept him upright, ensuring Will was steady on his feet before releasing him.

“I’ll see to a proper splint when we get back to my hotel, but for now-” Hannibal bent down and grabbed Matthew’s shirt, using his knife to slice through the material. Cutting a large chunk, Hannibal turned back to Will and carefully wrapped his damaged hand. “Good enough for a few hours, I think. Shall we?”

Hannibal walked off deeper into the woods, never looking back. Will turned to see the bodies of his friends and their attackers. He could make another run for it. He doubted Hannibal would even chase him. But what the hell would he be running towards? The only parts of his old life he cherished were now rotting around a dying campfire. Will took a shuddering breath and followed the stranger into the darkness.

Nursing his coffee under the neon *open* sign, Hannibal looked like some sort of businessman lost in the backroads of North Louisiana. He’d lost the coveralls in the car, revealing a red v-necked sweater and a pair of pressed khakis. He’d even changed shoes, leaving his muddy boots in the trunk beside the coveralls and slipping into a pair of supple leather loafers. His high cheekbones and strong jaw blinked blue and red under the neon sign, like some sort of Grecian-featured chameleon. Will let his eyes roam the planes of his face, cataloging the scar on the bridge of his nose, the indent on the knob of his chin, the hairline gap in his right eyebrow. Though he appeared elegant at first glance, this was the face of a scrapper, someone who had learned the hard way how to land a blow and shove off a strike.

That damaged brow raised. “Is the hot chocolate too warm?”

Will had been gripping the mug for dear life ever since Peggy had sat it down in front of him. He could feel the heat from the ceramic, but it didn’t seem to sink into his bones. “No, I…just not that hungry.”

“You’ll have to learn to eat, you’re underweight.” Hannibal sipped his coffee, eyes running over Will. “While your slight frame could encourage enemies to underestimate you, it won’t be an advantage if you really are malnourished.”

Will took a sip from his mug. “Enemies?”

Hannibal opened his mouth, then paused, smiling politely when Peggy sat two plates of scrambled eggs and a side of sausage in front of him. She winked at Hannibal as she sauntered away. He didn’t begin speaking again until Will picked up his fork and started eating.

“I have experienced…similar circumstances to the ones you found yourself in tonight.” Hannibal forked a bite of the eggs, his mouth forming a moue as he chewed. “Since my misfortune, I’ve made it a hobby of mine to locate those types of miscreants and…remove them from the general population.”

“So, like, you kill killers?”

Hannibal sighed. “Yes, I like *kill* kill them.”

“Why didn’t you – before- b-before-” Will could see the bloody pulp that had once been Jimmy’s face, the frozen shock on Bev’s lifeless features. He took a shuddering breath.

Pain shot through his arm. He looked up to see Hannibal pressing his thumb firmly into Will’s bandage. “If you make a scene, I’ll be forced to make sure no one remembers we were here.”

Will focused on the pain. He focused on the idea of keeping Peggy and the cook alive. He’d seen enough innocent blood spilled for one night. When Will looked up at Hannibal, his eyes were dry.

“Are you composed?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Keep eating.” Hannibal bit into a sausage, then promptly made a face before setting his fork down. “Tonight was an unusual night for me. I typically work alone, but as I age, I find it’s more difficult to lure the types of men I’m interested in dispatching.”

Will frowned. The man couldn’t be more than 30. “You’re not old.”

Hannibal smiled thinly. “I’m not young, either. I need someone with a youthful face. Someone who thinks quickly. Someone, who even when the situation looks dire, is willing to snap his own thumb and continue the fight. When I started following Mr. Brown, I noticed

his regard for you. I noticed too, certain traits you displayed that lead me to believe you might be a good candidate to continue my work."

Will shoved a forkful of rubbery eggs into his mouth before he did something stupid like scream. This man had been following him, following Matthew. He could have stopped this whole nightmare. This whole fucking night-

"And tonight, you proved to have all those instincts and more," Hannibal's eyes crinkled, and Will felt something akin to pride swell in his chest. He'd made this man proud, won his regard. He'd never earned that from another living soul. The closest he'd ever come were the pitying looks that Bev and Jimmy sometimes gave him when he came to school with a new shiner.

"You let me live because you think I'd appeal to pervs," Will tilted his head. "And you think I wouldn't mind helping you kill 'em."

Hannibal nodded.

"So…I'd be bait?"

"You'd be bait."

Will drained his mug. "Doesn't sound like a good deal to me."

"You'll get to kill more men like Matthew. I'll give you the skills to make their pain linger for hours, if you wish." Hannibal finished his coffee. "And while we train, you'll live in my home where I will feed you regular meals, educate that fascinating mind of yours, and never send you to school with a black eye and dirty clothes again."

Will froze. "How long have you been watching me?"

"Long enough to know that should be an appealing offer." Hannibal signaled Peggy for the check.

"If I say no?"

Hannibal shrugged. "You'll never see me again and I wish you the best of luck with your vocational schooling and alcoholic father. If you wish, I'll return his coveralls and boots from my trunk and make an anonymous call to the police. Their attentions should keep him busy for some time."

Will glanced at his swelling hand. He'd had worse from his old man, hell, at least Hannibal had bothered setting it. He thought about how easily the knife had driven into Tobias, the thrill of seeing the light drain from the boy's eyes. He thought about the look on Matthew's face when his throat opened up. How pretty the blood had looked in the dappled moonlight as it spouted from the bastard's throat. He thought of that white handled knife twirling in Hannibal's fingers.

"I want the knife."

“I’ll give you a knife.”

“No,” Will nodded out the window, to Hannibal’s car. “The one you used to kill Matthew – I want it.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, handing Peggy a fifty-dollar bill before she could hand him the check and telling her to keep it. Standing, Hannibal held the door open for Will. “We shall see if you earn it.”

Will looked up, smiling into Hannibal’s maroon eyes as he walked by. “I will.”

The Killer Is Inside The House

Chapter Summary

Will learns there's more to murder than he thought (who knew Italian was so essential?), and that he might have a crush on his teacher.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will hit the ground hard, a knee in between his shoulders pressing the air from his lungs. He was about to cry out when a hand grabbed a hank of hair at the crown of his head, jerking it from the ground at a painful angle. The blade, when it pressed into his neck was surprisingly warm – Hannibal must have been wearing it close to his skin.

Though the position was painful, Will refused to panic. He'd done that once before, flailing wildly when the blade at his throat reminded him of Matthew and Tobias. He'd cut himself badly and Hannibal had spent the rest of the night stitching the tear at the base of his throat and lecturing Will on the finer points of breathing techniques. Now, Will filled his lungs slowly, keeping still. As he drew in the scent of sweat and cologne that smelled of sandalwood and rosemary, the image of Matthew Brown left his mind, replaced with sharp cheekbones and hooded sparkling eyes.

"I can't decide…" Hannibal's lips scraped the back of Will's ear and he felt himself shudder at the sensation. "whether you are suicidal or simply incompetent. It has been less than 10 minutes and already you're dead."

"Maybe I had a shitty teacher?" Will rasped, straining against the blade. An amused puff of air coiled around the shell of his ear before he was released.

"Perhaps you do." Hannibal stood, brushing off bits of dirt and debris from his dungarees – Hannibal refused to say the word *jeans* and Will had taken to thinking of the rough pants Hannibal wore for training as *Hannibal's dungarees*. "Why did you not think to check your surroundings?"

"I did." Will frowned at the hand Hannibal offered him, preferring to pout in the dirt. He had checked his surroundings, just like Hannibal had shown him. "How was I supposed to know that you'd jump from a tree like a damn howler monkey."

Hannibal didn't smile, but his eyes narrowed in amusement. Will had come to love that expression in the months he'd spent in Maryland. "Attacks can come from anywhere, Will. Do you expect your assailant to walk toward you at a leisurely pace?"

"Expectations aren't really relevant, are they?"

Hannibal tilted his head. “How so?”

“I didn’t expect to watch my friends die. I didn’t expect to get a murder internship with some rich weirdo who’s aged out of the date rape murder racket…” Will gestured helplessly at himself. “I didn’t expect to be caked in mud with a knife to my throat most nights.”

Hannibal’s mouth edged down in the corners. “And you’re disappointed with this?”

Will shook his head. “No. Just…not anything that was offered up at Career Day.”

Hannibal hummed. “Perhaps the problem is your expectations for yourself were too low.”

Hannibal held up his white knife, the one with the beautiful flowers carved into the bone handle. “Are you ready to try again?”

Will nodded, smiling. “I’ll try to meet your expectations.”

Hannibal’s eyes shone in the darkness. “A ten second lead, I think. One…Two…Thre…”

Will took off into the woods, branches scratching at his arms, his heart beating fast as he thought of Hannibal catching him again.

Will tilted his head when he peered into his closet. It seemed his t-shirts were slowly disappearing. In their stead were a growing number of button-down shirts. His jeans, mercifully, were still folded in his dresser, but there were two pairs of dress pants that had joined the rest of the fancy clothes in the closet.

In a little over six months, Will had grown accustomed to Hannibal’s brand of persuasion. Nothing was ever demanded of him, but options were presented. And if those options were ignored, his clothes went missing. It seemed Hannibal took his means of influence seriously.

Will learned that button-down shirts and jeans at dinner would earn him small smiles and appraising looks. He found himself cherishing each small warmth the doctor doled out, even taking pains to brush his hair out of his eyes before coming down to dinner.

The doctor himself was never anything short of immaculate. He wore suits every day, even those days when he didn’t see patients. The suits were several layers and always in swirling patterns that never seemed to make sense together, yet looked stylish and interesting when on Hannibal’s body. Will had decided they were Hannibal’s armor, something to insulate the world from ever touching him. They kept him beautiful and impervious no matter the situation.

That was why Will had grown so fond of the rare moments when Hannibal removed his armor. During training in the woods, when he wore dungarees and soft black V-neck t-

shirts, or in the mornings, when he let his hair fall into his eyes and donned soft sweaters and fine cotton pajama pants to serve Will protein scrambles. Will spent many mornings wondering how soft those sweaters would feel in his fingers, and if the bramble of brown chest hair that peeked from the low collars would tickle his cheek.

Those thoughts seemed to pop up more and more and Will had begun rising earlier just to spend a few more minutes in the kitchen with Hannibal and those soft sweaters. Hannibal had plans for Will, and while Will appreciated their mission and the chance to exact revenge on those that would hurt others, that didn't mean that he hadn't made a few plans of his own.

Letting his fingers run over the selection of button downs, Will paused on a royal blue option. It seemed Hannibal liked him better in blue, he always watched Will more closely and smiled a little more warmly when the boy wore this shirt. With a small smile of his own, Will pulled the shirt from the hanger.

"Stop picking at your food, please." Hannibal watched Will over the rim of his wine glass. Will poked at a lump of tomato and looked up in displeasure. Hannibal sighed. "I made it especially for you. It's exactly like that swill you were trying to eat last week."

Will huffed. "Spaghetti pompadour-"

"Pomodoro."

"Whatever," Will sneered. "It's not Spaghetti Os."

"No, it's infinitely superior." Hannibal took a sip of his wine and stared at Will pointedly until the boy sullenly spun some noodles on his fork and took a bite. It was delicious, and the knowledge made Will scowl at the tomatoes as if they had betrayed him. He wasn't supposed to like this stuffy crap, it would only encourage Hannibal to make those weird foods again. "Perhaps when the quality of your diet matches the quality of your training you'll finally be able to best me."

"At least it's not that fish jello," Will grumbled, making sure to grouse as he took four quick forkfuls of the delicious pasta.

Hannibal's mouth curved gently. "We'll revisit the aspic when you've matured."

Will stuck his tongue out.

When Will agreed to move into Hannibal's home, he had pictured something a little more…murdery. A trailer larger than the one he and his father shared, perhaps, with rusted bloody knives hanging ominously near the door. Maybe a few skulls scattered around the lawn.

He had been right about the skulls, at least.

They seemed to adorn every room in Hannibal's home. Antlers, horns, even the skull of what Will was pretty sure was a bear, there was death lurking in every corner of Hannibal's home. Will found it oddly comforting as he explored the empty rooms when Hannibal went to work. Alone in the big house, each room seemed overwhelming until he found the bones. He'd seek them out, run his hands over the porous surfaces, and know without a shadow of a doubt that Hannibal had been in this very spot, probably adjusting the carcass until it caught the best light.

Spot the Death became Will's favorite pastime while Hannibal saw patients in the city. The man was a psychiatrist, apparently a pretty good one if the size of his house was any indication, and spent a majority of the daylight hours in his office in Baltimore. That left Will to wander the halls of the house, picking through each room for clues about the man he lived with.

Will had noticed that lack of pictures, first. There were no snapshots anywhere to be found in the house. No shots of Hannibal with friends, no pictures of Hannibal lounging on a beach, no albums filled with Lecter family memories and glimpses of Hannibal as a gangly teen with pimples and terrible hair. It was like the man appeared one day in the world, already chiseled from marble and wearing a paisley print.

The only real glimpse of Hannibal Will had found, other than the bones littered through his décor, was a faded photo tucked away in his study, in the third drawer of his ancient desk. The color on the paper bled, giving the image a grainy quality, but Will could make out a little blonde girl grinning fiercely at the camera, holding a handkerchief to her chest. There was lettering stitched on the corner of the cloth, and Will thought of the stained rusty fabric that Hannibal carried in his pocket. He squinted at the embroidery, it looked like it might be an *M*.

Will never mentioned the photo to Hannibal, though he visited it every day. He poured over every inch looking for clues. Something that would tell him more about the man who chased him through the woods at night, lecturing him on where to stab assailants and how to bring down bigger targets.

He was always careful to replace the photo exactly as he found it, but he must have gotten careless. One morning he found a note neatly stacked atop the photo.

Focus on your studies and not on going through my things, please.

Will was supposed to read and respond to questions Hannibal left for him with breakfast, it was some sort of home schooling that Hannibal assured him was better than the GED he'd gotten online. But Will found he didn't care for lessons in Italian and Philosophy, especially when no one was there to help him decipher them. He longed for Hannibal to return home every night so he could watch the doctor prepare food in the kitchen or run through the heavily wooded acre behind the house, as Hannibal chased him with a knife.

"Why do I have to do this?" Will shoved at an Italian primer filled with half conjugated verbs. "How is Italian going to help me kill anyone? Is it boredom? Am I boring them to

death?”

Hannibal had merely raised an eyebrow at that and continued going through declensions. When they had finished, Will still glaring at Hannibal’s elegant script correcting his blocky print, Hannibal leaned forward, resting a hand on Will’s shoulder. “All of these lessons, everything I ask of you, is so we can communicate.”

Will looked up, eyebrows furrowed. “In Italian?”

Hannibal smiled, squeezing his shoulder. Will felt himself flush warm. “In any and every language we can think of, and about any subject. Don’t you want that, Will?”

Will nodded, his cheeks burning.

“Good, then we’ll resume our studies in the morning.”

That night he dreamed of long dinners at Hannibal’s table, the doctor feeding him little bits of food and smiling. Will never complained about his lessons again and started practicing his accent as he roamed Hannibal’s halls.

Will could smell Bev’s blood as it flowed from her mouth. She was clawing at Will’s chest, nails ripping his shirt and digging into his skin.

“WHY DID YOU RUN?” Blood was running down his chest, burning him.

“Y-you told me-”

“YOU COULD HAVE SAVED ME! JIMMY WASN’T DEAD YET YOU COULD HAVE HELPED HIM!” Bev’s hands were sinking into his chest prying at his ribs.

“I didn’t- I wanted-”

“MURDERER!”

“I’m sorry!” Bev’s hands sunk into him pulling at his insides and rending vital bits of tissue into ribbons. “I’M SORRY I’M SORRY I’M SORRY I’M S-”

Will woke to the feeling of hands on his chest pressing him into the mattress as they sought to shake him awake. Will gasped, he couldn’t draw air into his lungs. The room was too small, the smell of blood too sharp in his nose.

“Will!” Hannibal’s face came into focus. The hands pressing him into the bed moved to Will’s neck, tipping his head back and allowing his airway to clear. “Breathe, Will. With me, please.”

Will watched as Hannibal took slow, exaggerated breaths. He tried to follow, his lungs allowing more and more oxygen as he watched the doctor. When he could finally draw

enough air to move, he rolled to the side, pulling back the covers. Hannibal hesitated for a moment before settling next to Will on the bed and drawing Will to his chest.

Strong fingers combed through Will's hair rubbing circles at the base of his skull. "Who was it tonight – Beverly tearing you apart or Matthew chasing you with the knife?"

"Bev…I should have, I should have done something. Rushed him."

"You would be dead too."

"But if we had all fought-"

"If you had all fought as one, if you had all brought guns, if you had all been trained assassins, if you all decided to go to the movies…Fantasies do not alter reality, Will. And no amount of self-flagellation will change those events," Hannibal wrapped his free hand around Will, stroking his back. Will burrowed into Hannibal's chest, the scent of sandalwood and rosemary strong at the base of his throat. "We cannot turn back time. I've tried for years and can assure you it's not possible."

Will toyed with the stitches on Hannibal's red sweater, his fingers shaking. "The little girl, in the picture."

Hannibal's hands stilled and for a moment Will feared he'd get up and leave. Slowly, the fingers began to stroke again and Will let out the breath he was holding. "Mischa. Her name was Mischa."

"Your sister?"

Hannibal hummed.

"What happened?"

"Are you sure my nightmares will help your own?"

Will pushed away from Hannibal's chest, craning to see his face. The doctor looked impassive as ever, but there was a slight downward set to his mouth and a dullness to his eyes that made Will shiver. He buried himself back into the warm safety of Hannibal's chest. "Only if you want to."

The sat in silence for a long time, Hannibal's heartbeat keeping time as Will calmed and the sweat on his body cooled. Will felt himself blinking slowly when Hannibal took a breath and spoke. "Mischa was a surprise. My mother was older when she had her, I was nearly nine. The moment I saw her she grabbed my hand and wouldn't release it. I was enamored after that."

Will shifted. A small smile played at Hannibal's lips, his eyes far away. "She couldn't pronounce my name properly. She would run through the halls of the house calling *Annibal!* I would hide somewhere very obvious and tickle her when she found me. I would make her flower crowns, she attempted a few for me, just lumps of crushed petals, really."

Will felt the huff of a laugh beneath his head. He smiled up at Hannibal as the man went back to toying with his hair.

“We were having a tea party when they came for us. I believe they wanted money and thought the estate would be an easy mark.” Though the fingers in his hair never stopped moving, the pressure behind them increased. Will could feel a tightening in Hannibal’s chest. “I think they killed my father first, mother shortly after. Mischa and I were in the east wing of the house, they didn’t find us right away.”

Hannibal paused, and Will pushed his face into Hannibal’s sweater. “You-you don’t have to tell me.”

“I tried to stand up to them, keep Mischa from harm. I used a shard from a shattered tea cup to slash one of their hands. That must have angered them, because they held me down and made me watch as they-” Hannibal’s fingers faltered for just a moment. He took a deep breath, exhaling through his nose – the calming technique he had shown Will. Closing his eyes, Will could see shattered china and a crumpled heap of flowers on a Turkish rug. “It was not quick. I remember every blow, every spurt of blood, every scream. Even as a child I knew that I had fueled their rage, they did not...my mother's garments were not removed. I don't think their choice with Mischa was made out of desire, but out of a need to ensure I suffered as much as possible while I watched.”

“How old were you?”

“Eleven.”

“And you’ve been killing ever since?”

Hannibal chuckled. “It did take me a few years to work out the finer points, but I suppose my interests in killing those who would harm the innocent were settled at a young age, yes.”

“I can picture you, studying some How to Murder book in a library, your bone knife at your side.”

“Something like that, I suppose.” Hannibal pulled Will a little closer. “I failed Mischa so miserably, I probably saw it as some form of penance.”

Will clung tighter to Hannibal. “There was nothing you could have done.”

“I am as culpable as you were,” Hannibal’s chin rested against the crown of Will’s head. “But that knowledge rarely mutes the screams, does it?”

“No.”

Hannibal stretched his neck, settling deeper into Will’s bed. “I cannot promise you the screams ever go away, but in time you will adjust to their volume.”

“Not very hopeful,” Will grumbled.

“Neither were your knife skills six months ago and look how far you’ve progressed.” Will laughed, a frail little sound in the quiet of the room. Hannibal’s hands paused. “I should return to my room.”

“Stay,” Will whispered, clinging to Hannibal’s sides. “Just a little longer.”

“You need to learn how to cope without me.”

“I will,” Will sank heavier onto Hannibal’s body. “Tomorrow.”

Hannibal sighed. “This is the last time I let you fall asleep in my arms, Will.”

Will yawned, nuzzling Hannibal’s chest. “You said that the last time.”

“Yes, well, even so.” Hannibal tugged softly at Will’s curls. “Sleep, we need to work on disarming assailants in the morning.”

Will raised a hand, forming a little finger gun and held it to Hannibal’s face. He smiled sleepily when Hannibal bit his index finger lightly before batting Will’s hand away.

When his dreams came, Will found a little blonde girl waiting for him in the woods instead of Beverly. She offered him a flower crown before taking his hand and leading him to a tea party.

Will kicked his feet out and bared his teeth in a feral grin when he connected with Hannibal’s side. The doctor flew backwards. Will scrambled to his feet and pounced, reaching for the bone handled knife that he knocked from Hannibal’s hand.

A hand clamped around Will’s ankle and dragged him back, just short of the knife. Will kicked out again, but his foot made no connection. He was pulled back further until he managed to buck free of the iron grip, turning to lunge at the man behind him.

Hannibal dodged easily, he snarled when Will charged him again, blood dripping from a split lip. Side-stepping Will’s attack, Hannibal tucked his toe in front of Will’s leading foot and pulled it out from under him, sending the boy crashing to the ground. Will landed with a thud, all the air rushing out of his lungs as Hannibal’s familiar weight landed on top of him. He was flipped so that Hannibal’s bleeding face could press close to his, the bone-handled blade against his throat.

“You did excellently with evasive maneuvers tonight, but you still allow your emotions to guide you. You can’t simply rush an attacker. You must have a plan, a strategy, especially if he is larger or has any sort of fighting backgr-”

If asked, Will couldn’t have said why he chose that moment to kiss Hannibal, only that he’d been dreaming about doing it for months. The doctor’s lips were soft, and his mouth, which opened on a gasp, tasted like cinnamon, clove, and fresh blood. Will was so focused on

naming the exact flavor of Hannibal's lips that he didn't notice the blade had dropped from his neck.

Will did notice when Hannibal reeled backwards, falling on his ass and scrabbling away until his back landed against a nearby tree. He blinked at Will, eyes wide and chest heaving. There was something in those bloody eyes that sparked and shone even in the low light. Will sat up, easing closer to Hannibal.

When Will reached out to touch Hannibal's leg, the doctor flew to his feet, grabbing the knife where it fell on the ground. "Have you learned nothing in our months together?"

"What?"

Hannibal was pacing back and forth. "Have you paid no attention? Do you not care whether you live or die?"

"I just thought-"

"You didn't think." Hannibal loomed over Will, eyes blazing. He paused, inches from Will's face before turning and walking toward the house. "You couldn't have possibly had a thought in that curly head when you did that."

Will glared, surging to his feet. "I wanted you to drop the goddamn knife, Hannibal. And you did."

Hannibal wheeled on Will, but the boy refused to back away. Instead, Hannibal resumed his pacing. "That's not a strategy. That's just a childish ploy which will not work unless someone has regard for you."

The knife in Hannibal's right hand began to twirl in his nimble fingers. Will was beginning to suspect it was a nervous habit disguised as a bit of showboating.

"These men we're hunting. These vile creatures – they will not care about your kisses or your pleas. Your stunning blue eyes will broker no leniency from them." Hannibal seemed furious, so Will ducked his head to smile. Hannibal thought his eyes were stunning. A finger poked Will in the chest. "Do not expose yourself to harm when you can win the advantage without such a gambit."

Will looked up, he made sure to bat his stunning blue eyes. "I won't."

"Good," Hannibal seemed distracted. He holstered his knife and turned back to the house. "I'll prepare dinner while you work on your blocking. Be at the table in 45 minutes."

Will watched Hannibal march between the trees, something battering about in his chest. Before the doctor moved out of earshot, Will called out, "Hannibal?"

"Yes?"

"Kissing only works if the person likes you? You're sure?"

Will didn’t need to see Hannibal’s face to know his lip was curling. “As I said.”

Will watched as Hannibal turned on his heel and disappeared into the woods. The boy smiled to himself, touching his lips.

“It worked on you,” He whispered to the trees before taking a defensive stance and going through his blocking drills.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Will decides he's more interested in sex ed than murder class.
Hannibal needs an aspirin...

The Killer Hones His Craft

Chapter Summary

Will decides to focus on seduction instead of murdering. Hannibal has a headache...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will took a few moments to set the scene before he screamed. He opened his pajama top to show a generous v of his chest. He took a long moment to properly tousle his hair so it fell over his eyes in a haphazard but attractive way. He grabbed a can of Axe and sprayed himself liberally so he'd smell like *Dark Temptation*. He wasn't sure what a Dark Temptation was, but it seemed like a good bet when he grabbed it at CVS. He pulled out the waistband of his pajama pants and sprayed some there too, just in case.

One final assessment in the mirror, and Will felt reasonably seductive. He paused to slip the side of his pajama top over his shoulder and smiled.

He was ready.

Settling into his bed, Will thrashed a few times to churn the sheets around his legs. Then, when the scene was set, Will screamed.

"NO! NO PLEASE! I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY!" He paused, but couldn't discern any footsteps in the hall. So, he used his diaphragm. "NO NO NO NO NO NO HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HEL-"

"WILL!" The door slammed open revealing Hannibal, who had apparently gotten dressed rather quickly. The doctor's hair was a wild tangle over his forehead, sticking up at all angles, his customary red sweater was rucked up his side, revealing a soft patch of skin around his stomach and the low dip in his hips.

Will had to bite the side of his cheek to keep from smiling. He looked better than Will had hoped. With a whimper, Will reached out shaking hands. "I- I couldn't save them! P-please!"

The boy scooted over in his bed, pulling back the sheets. He frowned when Hannibal didn't move from the doorway. "I…could you just stay w-with me-"

Hannibal's grip on the doorknob tightened. "Do not do this again."

Will's heart stuttered in his chest. He let his eyes go big. "I didn't mean to, I had a night-"

“You did not have a nightmare and I don’t appreciate being woken up for your childish games.” Hannibal’s voice was so stern Will recoiled slightly.

“What? I did have one!” Nervously tugging the pajama top back over his shoulder, Will frowned.

“You did not.” Hannibal’s head dropped to rest on the doorjamb. Will could feel the man’s disappointment leaching off of him. It made Will feel clammy, he shivered. It wasn’t supposed to be like this. Hannibal was supposed to be in the bed by now.

“H-how would you know if I had a nightmare or not,” Will said in a small, miserable voice.

Hannibal’s head lifted. “You don’t smell afraid.”

“YOU SMELL ME?” Will felt something hot surge in his chest. When had Hannibal smelled him? Did he smell good?

“Difficult to avoid, especially when you insist on buying that…pungent body spray.”

“O-oh.” Will felt flames licking up his neck. He wanted to take a shower. Instead, he pulled his shoulders back and tried to look confident. “So, I don’t smell afraid?”

“No.”

“What does fear smell like?”

“It’s acrid, bitter.”

“Oh…” Will watched as Hannibal straightened in the doorway. As he started to leave, Will sat up. “Hannibal?”

“Yes?”

“Aside from the body spray,” Will tilted his head. “Do I usually smell good? To you, I mean.”

Hannibal blinked. He looked very tired. “Goodnight, Will.”

The door started to close again and Will reached out a hand instinctively. “I’m sorry I lied. I won’t do it again.”

The corner of Hannibal’s mouth ticked up and the tension around his eyes softened. “Thank you, Will. Goodnight.”

“I do still have nightmares sometimes.” Will plucked absently at his duvet. His fingers tracing the antlers of embroidered stags.

“I know, Will. Goodnight.”

Will took a breath, pulling his lips between his teeth to worry them for a moment. “Y-you’ll still come for the real ones, right?”

Hannibal sighed. “Goodnight, Will.”

“O-oh, OK,” Will’s face dropped. Disappointment churned in his stomach. He’d broken something tonight and the knowledge tore at him. He was upset that Hannibal wasn’t currently wrapped around him stroking his hair, of course, but the idea that the doctor didn’t trust him, thought him a liar made something dark and hard form in the pit of his stomach. “Goodnight.”

Hannibal nodded, closing the door as he slipped from Will’s room. Will sat in the dark, listening to his shaking breath, furious, his eyes were pricking with tears.

“Will?” Hannibal’s voice was muffled through the wooden door.

Will jumped, swiping at the moisture in his eyes and trying to clear the emotion from his throat. “Yeah?”

“If they’re real, I’ll return.”

Will smiled in the dark, burrowing into the sheets. He’d throw out the Axe Body Spray tomorrow. “Goodnight, Hannibal.”

“Goodnight, Will.”

“Hannibal? Hannibal, I wanted to go for a run, maybe hit the store on my way back. You want me to pick up anything?” Will walked through the study, looking for the man in question. Most Saturdays, Hannibal spent reading in the morning and Will frowned at his absence.

Rounding the desk, Will saw an envelope with *Mr. Andrew Graham* written in Hannibal’s neat script. Picking it up, Will opened it and pulled out a letter, a check fluttered to the floor at his feet.

“Please don’t resort to check fraud, we’re strictly in the murder business, Will.” He didn’t know when Hannibal had crept up behind him, but Will had learned not to jump or jolt when the older man materialized.

Picking up the check, Will turned to frown. “You’re still sending him money?”

“I think it would be prudent, until your 18th birthday to keep your father from…making a scene with the authorities.” Bev, Jimmy, and their murderers had been reported missing the day after Will and Hannibal left Louisiana. No one bothered to look for Will, why would they when Andy Graham had told the police his son had gone to live with an aunt?

Will's father was either too hungover or too money hungry to ask many questions of the man who appeared on his doorstep, offering cash and a thin story about a mechanical engineering school out west. Will tried not to think about the father who sold him, choosing instead to focus on the man who seemed content to pay for the pleasure of feeding, clothing, and educating him.

"He's just going to drink it away, you know." Will thought of the stench of whiskey and the nights he'd dread hearing the old pickup screech down the driveway.

"Let him."

Will worried the note. "He's not going to read this."

"It doesn't matter, it's all lies about your internship at a mechanical school."

Will shook his head. "All this money and effort, it's a waste."

A hand rubbed between Will's shoulder blades. "A bargain, to have your company."

"A bargain, huh?" Will glanced at the check, then brought it closer to his face to be sure. He whistled lowly. "If that's a bargain, I've got to know what you would have spent."

"Let's just be grateful your father didn't recognize your true value," Hannibal said as he slipped the check from Will's hand and back into the envelope with his note. "If he'd demanded that, I wouldn't be able to keep you in Spaghetti Os and poly blends."

Will grinned, plucking at his t-shirt. It featured Snoopy, which Hannibal had somehow never heard of. "This is 100% cotton."

"More's the pity that a natural fiber was wasted on that sartorial disaster." Hannibal licked the envelope and handed it to Will. "Please mail this when you run by the post office."

Will huffed, shoving the letter into his pocket. "I still think the money could be better spent."

"Yes, I'm sure there are a myriad of canine t-shirts you've yet to purchase."

"We could always kill him, you know." Will shrugged. "I wouldn't mind."

"I would. Dead family leads to suspicious authorities. Let's keep your father inebriated and let his liver do the heavy lifting for us."

Will nodded. He stepped closer to Hannibal and hugged him fiercely, feeling a little thrill when the action seemed to stun the man in his arms. "You need anything…from the store?"

"No, thank you." Hannibal quirked an eyebrow. "But please don't come home with any more of those *finger* bars, you littered the carpet with crumbs last week."

Will gave Hannibal a little mock salute as he turned to jog out the door. “Pop Rocks it is.”

“Pop what?”

Will couldn’t wait to see the horror on Hannibal’s face when he returned with the candy.

“You need to work on your distraction techniques,” Hannibal intoned as he washed a pile of courgettes, careful to keep their flowers attached. “Too often you focus on getting a weapon when you should be focused on subduing your foe.”

“I’ve heard weapons are a good way of doing that,” Will grumbled as he took another courgette from Hannibal to pat dry.

“Yes, but your idea of a weapon is too limited.” Hannibal tapped the paring knife beside him. “Of course, a blade or gun would be ideal, but it’s foolhardy to attempt to wrangle one from an assailant. Look for a projectile or an improvised bludgeoning tool. A branch or rock would be-”

Will hit Hannibal between the eyes with a courgette, smiling when the doctor blinked in surprise. “Like that?”

There was barely time to laugh before Hannibal had Will by the collar, pinning him to the counter top. “Very good, but as I’ve tried to impress on you before – improvisation without follow-through is useless unless t-”

Will pressed the paring knife to Hannibal’s carotid, scraping it slightly along the day’s worth of stubble he found. “Unless there is a greater purpose you had in mind.”

Hannibal lowered his chin, smiling full and wide at Will. “Would you like wine with dinner tonight?”

Will grinned, the blade trembling lightly in his hands. “Yeah.”

Hannibal narrowed his eyes. Will sighed before batting his eyelashes. “I mean, *yes please and thank you*.”

“Incorrigible,” Hannibal muttered. He released Will, but the boy followed Hannibal as he tried to back away, knife still pressed to his throat and his free hand finding the small of Hannibal’s back before sinking lower. “Unless you’re planning on finishing me off, please release me so I may finish the umido.”

Will tilted his head, letting the blade fall to the base of Hannibal’s throat, resting on his open collar. He could feel Hannibal’s attraction in his bones, knew it mirrored his own. Which made the doctor’s obstinate refusals even more frustrating. Perhaps he needed Will to take charge? “What would you do if I cut a few buttons off?”

“I would put you over my knee.” Hannibal snarled at Will’s bright smile. “You would not enjoy it. Release me before I release myself.”

Will let his hand drop a few inches lower, thrilling when he felt Hannibal’s muscles coil. He was so tempted to squeeze the swell of flesh beneath his hand.

“Move your hand, William.”

How? Will wanted to ask, but had a feeling he’d regret that. Instead, Will adopted his most innocent face. “I’ll pour the wine, shall I?”

He stepped back, moving to grab the open bottle. A hand clamped on his wrist and spun him into Hannibal’s chest. “You will touch nothing else in this kitchen and go sit at the table.”

Will winked, doing his best to saunter as he left the room.

Dinner, as was customary in the last two weeks, was conducted entirely in Italian. Though it was nearly impossible at first, Will found he was growing more comfortable conversing about a myriad of topics from Keats to proper form when asphyxiating a target. Tonight, however, Will had come to the table prepared.

“How old are you, Hannibal?” Will asked in well-rehearsed Italian. He swirled the wine in his glass as Hannibal had and took a sip. He tried not to grimace at the slightly bitter taste.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “I’m 28.”

Will looked up, eyes wide. “Really? You seem older.”

“I will assume your poor Italian has made you inadvertently rude,” Hannibal said, straightening in his chair. “I’m quite young to have my own successful practice.”

Will scowled, taking another sip of wine. His head felt funny. “My Italian is good!”

Hannibal sighed. “Then I shall be insulted.”

“No, no! You don’t like *look* old, it’s just…” Will forked some umido and chewed, this was going wrong. “You act old…and dress old.”

Hannibal’s mouth twitched at the corner. “I shall endeavor to find some plaid shirts and dungarees to wear at my sessions.”

“I didn’t,” Will huffed, taking another gulp of wine. “I just meant you’re really, like, not that much older than me.”

Hannibal huffed slightly, hiding the curl of his smile behind his wine glass. “I am most assuredly *like totally* older than you.”

Will shook his head, trying to remember what he wanted to say. His plan seemed fuzzy. “Not really, people our ages date all the time.”

Hannibal scoffed, before taking a delicate bite of a courgette. “If a person my age dallies with a person your age, they are gossiped about and thrown in jail.”

Will put his glass down a little harder than he meant to. The goblet tipped and would have spilled had Hannibal not caught it, saving his tablecloth. He gave Will a pointed look. Will glared back. “I’m almost 18.”

“I’m almost done with dinner.” Hannibal tilted his head. “I suggest you take a few more bites before you’re unable to move your hands.”

Will’s eyebrows furrowed, but he glanced down at his hands. They didn’t seem to come into focus. He felt sluggish as he looked up at Hannibal, who was smiling. Will squinted, he’d only had half a glass of wine there was no way…

“Did you drug me?” Will’s tongue felt heavy, his limbs seemed to be sinking off his body.

“Did you think to check your drink?” Hannibal asked as if every good host roofied the people who sat at his table. Will reached for him, his hand flopping on a fork and flipping a plate.

“W-why?” Will began to slump forward, but a strong hand wrapped around his chest and he was tugged upright.

“Two reasons,” Hannibal said in his ear. Will could feel himself being lifted, his body cradled in Hannibal’s arms. This would have been ideal, had Will been able to maintain control of his limbs. “The first was to teach you to check any and all food or drink you’re given. These men are ruthless and you’ll need to be sharp to defeat them.”

Will made a noise, it was supposed to be a question but his tongue wasn’t cooperating. He could hear the steady tap of Hannibal’s shoes as he was carried up the stairs.

“You’re a better conversationalist when you’re sober,” Hannibal whispered. The doctor’s breath stirred the hair curling above his ear and Will shivered. Hannibal cleared his throat. “The second reason is we need to begin building a tolerance to common sedatives and tranquilizers in your system. If you can’t avoid being drugged, your goal should be to maintain consciousness, feign greater symptoms than you have, and use that as an advantage.”

Will made a disgruntled noise, his hands grappling with Hannibal’s shoulders when he felt himself being lowered onto a bed. He could feel Hannibal remove his shoes and belt, loosen the collar of his shirt, and tuck the covers tightly around his shoulders.

“Another reason, perhaps, was a chance to see you to bed without being attacked by a teenage octopus.” Hannibal brushed back the hair from Will’s face and the boy could swear he felt a soft press of lips against his forehead before the world went black.

Hannibal reared back, smacking Will into a nearby tree. The blow hurt, but Will maintained his chokehold on the doctor. When he saw Hannibal shift his weight, Will went with him, overbalancing Hannibal and dragging him to the ground.

They landed with a combined grunt, a grand tangle of limbs and snarls. Will saw the handle of Hannibal’s bone blade before the doctor could free it from the sheath on his thigh. Will kicked out sending the knife flying before pulling back his leg and driving his heel into Hannibal’s hip. The older man groaned and coiled, giving Will enough time to fumble over to the blade.

Turning, Will found Hannibal crouched, waiting for Will’s attack. Will smiled, blood dripping from his nose. He’d split Hannibal’s lip again, and the smear of blood across the doctor’s chin made Will’s mouth water. He charged directly at Hannibal, watching as the older man set his stance, ready to side step.

At the last second, Will dropped to the ground, sliding below Hannibal’s arms and grabbing his lead foot. Using his momentum, he pulled Hannibal’s legs out from under him, grinning when he heard a surprised yelp and a heavy *thud*. Scrambling up the doctor’s prone form, Will pressed the blade into Hannibal’s jugular, using his knees to pin his arms.

Will smiled and could see the expression mirrored in Hannibal’s eyes. Something hot and tight burned in Will’s chest – Hannibal was proud of him. The boy leaned down, only to feel Hannibal tense when his mouth was inches from his own.

“Are you suicidal or just this incompetent, Hannibal?” Will whispered.

Hannibal turned his head, moving his mouth away from Will’s. The boy did note, however, that the doctor’s breathing was unsteady as he licked his lips. “Just because you’ve pinned me doesn’t mean the fight is over. If you stop to gloat I could throw you off.”

Will cocked his head, settling a little more firmly onto Hannibal’s chest. “Does that mean you want to be under me presently?”

Hannibal’s head snapped back, eyes sparking.

“Will,” he warned.

Will pressed closer. He could feel Hannibal’s control stretching thin, and longed for it to snap. “Try kissing me, maybe I’ll drop the blade.”

The game was over when the predatory gleam left Hannibal’s eyes. His whole body seemed to heave a sigh and he looked very tired as he regarded Will. “We have discussed this

on numerous-"

"No! You dictated," Will tapped the blade against Hannibal's neck to make the older man glare. "Which is what you always do. I want-"

"You are a child," Hannibal's voice was flat, but his body was coiling beneath Will.

"I'm 17," Will sniped. "And you are interested, Hannibal. I know you are, I can feel it."

"I'm interested in you focusing on the task at hand."

Will could see color rising on Hannibal's cheeks in the moonlight. He waggled his eyebrows. "What task do you want in my hand?"

Hannibal surged up and Will fell backwards, smacking his shoulder on a birch. Before he could recover the knife, Hannibal was on top of him, one hand tight to his throat, the other pinning his right hand.

"I'm fine with this position too." Will pushed his throat against Hannibal's hand until the doctor recoiled.

"Do you know why I refuse you?" Hannibal was on his feet before Will could register he'd been released. Hannibal looked tired again, and so very disappointed. Will felt all his adrenaline and bravado drain from his body, leaving him cold and shivering in the dirt. "Because this- this refusal to listen to what I want, this pathetic dogged pursuit even after I've asked you to stop is evidence of what a child you are."

Will gasped as if he'd been hit, turning from Hannibal so the older man wouldn't see the tears as they formed in his eyes. Shame burned into his chest as he listened to the sound of retreating footsteps. Swiping at the tears on his face, Will found Hannibal's knife and held it up.

"I'm keeping your fucking knife!" He yelled at the empty woods. The handle felt cold in his hand, the blade had already lost all the warmth of Hannibal's body. Closing his eyes in an attempt to stop his tears, Will slashed at the birch beside him, trying to gouge the shame and pain from him as he stabbed the bark.

When he calmed, Will studied the bone handle of the knife, still lodged in the tree. The flowers were all the same, some type of feathery-petaled bloom with multiple stamen springing from the middle. It was intricate and Will knew immediately that Hannibal must have spent hours over the blade, etching fine details into the bone.

Pulling the knife from the tree, Will ran the blade along his arm. He'd dulled it hacking at the wood, it had none of the beautiful fierceness that made him think of Hannibal anymore. With a sigh, Will stood, brushing himself off.

He tucked the knife into his waistband and headed for home. He'd sharpen the blade before he returned it to Hannibal. Perhaps by the time he'd restored the piece to its glory,

Will would think of a suitable apology as well.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Will apologizes, Hannibal makes an offer, and Will finally graduates to murder.

The Killer Drops a Body

Chapter Summary

> Will and Hannibal reach and understanding, Hannibal discovers highway rest stops, Will kills someone.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will shifted from foot-to-foot in the doorway of the study. Hannibal did not look up from his position on the couch, but the hard line of his shoulders and the set in his jaw were enough to let Will know the older man was very much aware of his presence. Will shifted onto the creaking board. Hannibal's mouth tightened slightly, but he continued to read.

Heat crawled up Will's cheeks, but he took a breath and knocked on the doorjamb. Finally, Hannibal glanced up from his book.

"Hey," Will said, he kicked at nothing in the doorway. Hannibal continued to stare coolly at him, making no move to beckon him closer.

"Did you eat?"

"Yeah, there was cassoulet in the fridge." Will didn't mention that he'd eaten it cold as he hunched over his whetstone, sharpening Hannibal's knife. He also didn't mention how badly he missed discussing his day in Italian with Hannibal. "I *uh* I brought you back your knife."

"I was under the impression you were *fucking* keeping it."

Will held up the knife and took a deep breath, exhaling from his nose. It didn't do much to calm him now but it did keep the tremor out of his voice. "I want to earn it."

Hannibal studied him a moment longer, just enough for Will's resolve to crack and his body to squirm under the scrutiny. Then, Hannibal carefully closed his book, sat it on the table beside his sofa, and patted the seat next to his.

Will tried to keep his gait reasonably slow as he scrambled to get to Hannibal's side. He was careful to leave a respectable few inches between their legs on the couch. He looked at Hannibal before fidgeting with the knife in his hands. Finally, he offered the blade to Hannibal, who smiled when he looked at it.

"Did you sharpen it?"

“Yeah, like you showed me! I polished it too.” Will ran his fingers over the carvings. “It’s bone, right?”

“Yes.”

Will tilted his head. He could see Hannibal selecting a bone from a body, carefully boiling the flesh and sinew from it before treating and bleaching it. There were a few men on the docks of Louisiana who did that, their knives were always too expensive for Will to buy. “You…you made it yourself?”

Hannibal’s mouth pulled at the corner. It should have been a smile but Will could see that distant look in his eyes. “My first victim.”

“No, that’s not right-” Will took the knife back, fingers tracing each detailed line carved into the bone, how much painstaking love had been put into every floral detail. He could see the blurry face of a young blonde girl, giggling as she tried to balance a pile of crumpled flowers on Hannibal’s head. He could see a young boy, too, standing over her crumpled ruined body, and deciding he couldn’t bare to part with her. Will blinked, his eyes tearing. “She’s always with you. She guides your hand in all your kills.”

His grip on the knife changed, cradling it to his chest as he looked at Hannibal, who touched his cheek and smiled. “Remarkable boy.”

“The flowers, were they her favorite?”

“I’m not sure she lived long enough to have a favorite, but rue grew in abundance along our grounds. I would make her crowns from the branches.” Hannibal reached out and took the knife, twirling it in his fingers. “*Here did she fall a tear, here in this place. I’ll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace*.”

A tear slid down Will’s cheek, Hannibal caught it with a thumb before he could wipe it away. “Did you write that for her?”

Hannibal laughed, a bright, loud noise in the quiet room “It’s from *Richard II*, which I believe I asked you to read?”

Will blushed, ducking his head. He had certainly read the Wikipedia summary. “It’s not like I memorized it.”

Hannibal hummed, setting the knife beside his book on the end table. “I thank you for returning her to me.”

“I won’t try to take her again,” Will promised.

Hannibal nodded. “I appreciate the sentiment. I would also appreciate an assurance that there won’t have a repeat of tonight’s behavior.”

Will felt his throat constrict. He knew he wasn’t imagining whatever it was between them. He knew it. But that didn’t mean he wasn’t making Hannibal uncomfortable. And that

was the worst thought of all – not that he'd never get to properly kiss Hannibal, but that he'd be denied Hannibal's company, his regard, when he'd worked so hard to earn it.

"I'm sorry," Will said in one breath.

"Are you? Or are you sorry that I got angry?" Hannibal asked. "I need to know you're sincere in this."

"I know! I do, I shouldn't- it's just, like you know…"

"I *like* don't know." Will could feel Hannibal's amusement. But he had to say something. A man would declare himself. Hannibal would declare himself.

"It's just," Will scrunched his eyes together before slitting them open to glance at Hannibal. "I like you."

"I like you as well, Will."

"No, like, I wanna *do* things to you."

"What things?" Will could feel heat creeping over his cheeks. Hannibal's hand was cool when it traced his blush. "If you can't tell me, then I think you'll agree you're not ready to have those requests fulfilled."

"So, if I tell you I want you to stick your dick in-" Hannibal's hand clamped over Will's mouth.

"Let me rephrase," Hannibal said, raising an eyebrow. "I'm not prepared to fulfill any requests of that nature at this time."

Hannibal dropped his hand, rolling his eyes when Will licked his lips. "*At this time* means you might at some other time."

"If you were this tenacious with your Italian, we could be discussing Dante by now."

"Hannibal, will there be a time?"

Hannibal put his hand over Will's squeezing softly.

"Don't mistake reluctance for disinterest, Will." Will opened his mouth, but Hannibal raised a hand to silence him. "But don't confuse harassment with persistence either. Are you more or less likely to acquiesce to a request if you feel unduly pressured?"

"So, what? Good things come to those who wait?" Will tried not to pout, but Hannibal's crinkling eyes indicated he may have failed.

"That's what I've been telling myself since the very moment I saw you." Hannibal patted Will's shoulder. Will put his hand over Hannibal's and huffed a frustrated sigh.

“I can feel it, you know,” Will said, his eyes met the doctor’s and he could see the desire again, the dark bloody desire that so mirrored his own. “How much you want me. Sometimes the things in my head, the things I see us doing together. I’m not sure if they come from you or me.”

“And that is why we won’t be doing any of them,” Hannibal slipped his hand from Will’s body and leaned back. “Not until you’re sure what you want isn’t merely a product of your astounding empathy.”

“It’s not.”

“Then it shouldn’t alter while we wait.” Hannibal nodded at the door. “Now, please, go to bed.”

Will stood but turned to face Hannibal, chin high and chest puffed.

“When I’m 18, I’m gonna ask you out.” Will said with a determined nod.

Hannibal’s face cracked into a grin. “Perhaps. Or perhaps you will have found someone more age appropriate to offer your affections to. That girl at the coffee shop seems quite keen to make your orders.”

Will set his jaw, shaking his head stubbornly. Hannibal merely smiled indulgently before taking up his book again. Will turned to leave but stopped when he heard Hannibal’s voice.

“Or perhaps,” Hannibal said, never taking his eyes from the page. “I’ll ask you out before you get the chance.”

Will didn’t turn. He knew Hannibal’s face would be impassive, eyes trained on his book. Instead he ducked his head and allowed himself a smile. He could wait eight months for Hannibal Lecter.

Will blinked slowly, his head bobbing. He shook it, glaring at Hannibal, who’s mouth had drawn into a tight frown. Will poked at his glass, his uncoordinated fingers tipping the container. “The water?”

Hannibal caught the glass and righted it a few inches away from Will’s sluggish hands. “Several items, actually.”

Will nodded, his head dipping alarmingly low. A large hand stopped him from faceplanting on his root vegetable medley.

“Thought we were gonna train,” he slurred trying to angle his head to look up at Hannibal. He smiled as he was shifted, letting his head fall into the crook of Hannibal’s shoulder as the older man gently lifted him from his seat at the dinner table. “Never mind this…better”

Hannibal chuckled softly, his chin brushing against Will's cheek. "We'll see if you think so in the morning, when I lecture you on checking foods for chemical alterations again."

Will made a noncommittal noise and went slack in Hannibal's arms, trusting the doctor to bear his full weight as he was carried up the steps and to his bedroom. He felt the mattress dip below him and made a few clumsy attempts to paw Hannibal into the bed beside him. He could hear Hannibal laugh every time he swung a limb in his general direction.

"I thought we had been making progress with your tolerance levels at least," Hannibal said to himself as he removed Will's shoes and socks. "I shall have to recheck my dosage notes."

Will's breathing was deep and even by the time Hannibal returned to his face. He felt soft fingertips trace the planes of his cheeks and his fluttering eyelids. Will made another low noise smiling at the touches. Hannibal's hands found their way to his collar, where his tie was removed and his shirt unbuttoned to the chest.

"You are a divine torture to behold, Will Graham," Hannibal murmured. His fingers traced the sinew of Will's neck, stopping to catch at the base of his throat. "Your Suprasternal notch haunts my dreams, beautiful boy."

"Weird," said Will opening his eyes to smile in the doctor's face. "I just think about your ass."

Hannibal froze, a slight shift in his eyebrows the only clue that blind panic was currently coursing through his veins. Will used the temporary distraction to slowly twine his arms around Hannibal's torso, stroking softly along the silk of the doctor's waistcoat.

"How did you avoid the drugs?" Hannibal must have been utterly caught off guard, Will noted, since he did nothing to distance himself from the younger man.

"I didn't, but for the record – you drugged the au jus, the water, and that apricot spread on the amuse bouche." Will raised an eyebrow, his mouth curling into a wide grin when Hannibal nodded. He drew closer to Hannibal's face, letting his cheek drag against the sprouting of stubble against Hannibal's chin. When his lips touched the base of Hannibal's ear, he whispered, "If you can't avoid being drugged, your goal should be to maintain consciousness, feign greater symptoms than you have, and use that as an advantage…How'd I do?"

Will let his head fall back, fingers still exploring the curves of Hannibal's muscles as he stroked the older man's back. He was starting to feel sluggish now, but he'd fight the effects of the drugs a little longer if it meant he could keep his hands on Hannibal.

The doctor, for his part, made no move to remove himself from the embrace. He seemed content to stare down at Will, his eyes glittering in the dark bedroom light. When Hannibal brought his hand back to Will's face, brushing unruly curls from his forehead and tracing the boy's cheekbone, Will shuddered at the attention. It was better than anything his brain had conjured.

“You’re ready.” Hannibal’s voice was low and rough.

Will released Hannibal to shove at the buttons on his shirt. “Hell yes, I’m ready I’ve been telling you I’m rea-”

Hannibal caught Will’s hands, huffing as amusement spread over his face. “For a hunt, Will.”

“Oh,” Will frowned, his heartbeat still rabbiting and driving the drugs back from his brain for a few minutes longer. It took him a moment for Hannibal’s words to register as anything but another rejection. “OH!”

Will tried to sit up, but swayed, he shook his head. Hannibal moved with him, steadying Will as he raised himself up. “Who? Do I know him? It’s that guy that always makes the comments when I’m on my run, right? When can I do it? Can I use a knife? I’m better at asphyxiation, though. Do we have a grave site picked?”

“We will discuss this in the morning when the drugs aren’t fighting with your system.” Hannibal tilted his head. “I think I may accompany you on your run tomorrow.”

Will let Hannibal maneuver him back onto the mattress, his lips curling gently as Hannibal tucked him back into the bed. “I’m gonna pass out for real now.”

“Yes, I think so.”

Will hummed. “Feel free to stay and grope me, maybe kiss me a few times.”

Hannibal stood, rolling his eyes. “You are utterly exhausting.”

“If you’re tired, you should sleep here.”

Hannibal sighed. “Utterly impossible as well.”

“You love me and my supernatural neck.” Will burrowed into the covers, eyes drooping.

“Suprasternal notch.”

“I love you too, you know.”

Hannibal let his fingers ruffle through Will’s hair a few times. Will let himself push into the touch. “Yes, I think I do know that. Now, please, get some sleep.”

Will cocked his head as he looked at the files on Hannibal’s desk. He made sure to lean a little into Hannibal’s space, hoping the doctor noticed the deep v in the t-shirt he was wearing. “Did you do all this research?”

“No.” Hannibal sat back in his seat, eyeing Will and his shirt suspiciously. Will smiled innocently and tugged his shirt down a little lower. “The FBI was kind enough to assemble this information for us.”

Hopping on the desk, Will made sure his leg was brushing against Hannibal’s. He smiled when the doctor made no move to end the touch. Tapping the folders, Will furrowed his brow. “You have access to FBI files?”

“I have access to the head of the behavioral science unit. He asked me to complete a few profiles for him on serial rape and murder cases that are being investigated.” Hannibal puffed his chest slightly. “I am considered an expert in my field.”

Will ducked his head and smiled. He knew. Lord, did he know. There wasn’t a day that went by when he didn’t hear Hannibal talking with a medical journal publisher, refusing to teach a semester at Hopkins because of his busy schedule, or discussing an awards dinner. It would all be very impressive if so much of it didn’t take him away from Will.

“So, the guy that catches serial killers doesn’t notice that he never catches them?” Will asked. “He doesn’t think it’s odd that his suspects keep turning up dead?”

“Don’t be absurd.” Hannibal huffed. “I profile the real killers, they’re usually fairly easy to spot. These are merely the suspects that don’t fit the profile. They all have violent histories and patterns that will lead them to escalation, if it hasn’t already, but the FBI won’t care about them until then.”

“Table scraps,” Will teased.

“That is what you’ll be eating tonight if you don’t drop these childish provocations and pick a target.”

Will grinned. “This guy.”

“Kenneth Parsons? What made you choose him?”

Will shrugged leaning over the file. “I don’t like his face.”

“Will, I’d prefer we didn’t go around killing people you find unattractive.”

Will shook his head. “No…there’s something about his eyes. He’s like Matt.”

Will could picture Matthew’s beady eyes, absorbing others’ pain and wanting more. This man had the same set in his blue eyes. “He likes to hurt people doesn’t he?”

“He has several assault charges, but none have stuck to him so far. He was asked to leave his university, though the administration apparently wasn’t forthcoming with details.” Hannibal folded his hands on the desk. “Judging by his history if he hasn’t already escalated to murder, it won’t be long.”

“He’s killed before.” Will nodded to himself. He could see it as he read the file, how often he was questioned, how frequently his name popped up on multi-state inquiries as a

person of interest. He always seemed close to the crimes, in the vicinity of death. Parsons was a long-haul trucker, fit, and looking to watch someone suffer. Will let the information wash over him, fragments and impressions gelling together in his mind. “I go to the same truck stops on my route. I do this because though I am known, the prostitutes who haunt these spots are not, nor will they be missed. I prefer boys, desperate skinny ones who will do anything for a meal or a kind word, but I’ll take women if the pickings are slim. I’m entitled to their pain, entitled to their last breath. I make it hurt, it can last for hours in my cab, I’ll drive them across state lines and along my delivery routes, bound, gagged and pleading. I tie them loosely sometimes, because their hope amuses me. It’s fun to watch it die when I catch them again. I have no particular dumping ground for their bodies. I have no use for them once the terror drains from their eyes. I’m hard to catch because my only real pattern is pain.”

Will didn’t realize he closed his eyes until he felt Hannibal’s hand on his knee. His eyes fluttered open to reveal Hannibal looking up at him with shining eyes. “You put all that together from this file?”

“I see things,” Will mumbled, heat flooding his cheeks.

“Astonishing,” Hannibal whispered, squeezing Will’s leg. Will felt his blush deepen, warm in the knowledge that he’d impressed Hannibal.

The doctor stood, holding out his hand to Will. “Come, we have a few rest stops on the 95 corridor to research.”

Love’s Travel Stop wasn’t the most scenic shop Will had ever seen in his life, but it wasn’t bad. The bathrooms smelled of piss and Lysol, which at least indicated that someone bothered cleaning them a few times a week. The linoleum floor was only vaguely sticky under Will’s shoes and he noted that cigarettes were a lot cheaper in Virginia than they were in Maryland. The gas station itself featured bright florescent lights that gave a green pallor to the employees and the rows of chips and candies that flanked the cash register. There were also a few sad racks of imitation leather coats and t-shirts emblazoned with *Jesus Is My Rock and That’s How I Roll* or *Virginia Is for Lovers* that Hannibal recoiled from as if touching them would permanently graft them to his person. Will resolved to order him the tackiest Virginia Is for Lovers t-shirt he could find as a memento of their little road trip.

There was a McDonalds sprouting from one side of the sprawling mart, replete with molded plastic booths and the smell of old fry grease. It was here that he’d get Parsons to take the bait, with the scent of old coffee and industrial cleaner swirling around them.

After six weeks of observation, Will knew the routine. In about 40 minutes Parsons would pull up on his weekly run taking a load of auto parts from Charleston to Greenbelt. He’d pocket an Oh Henry bar, and buy a large stale coffee and a pack of American Spirits when he filled up his tank, then pull the truck around to the wooded back of the truck stop, where the 18 wheelers congregated before reentering the store to order a big mac, large sweet tea, and an apple pie. He’d browse the magazines as he ate, leaving smudges on the covers. The whole process would take about 25 minutes, so Will needed to work fast.

Hannibal had seemed oddly reluctant to leave Will in the parking lot, even though they had meticulously planned the timeline. Hannibal would drop Will, fill his tank, and drive north to the Emporia Shopping center and return in two hours.

But Hannibal had tarried.

He wanted to go over the plan, then go over it again. He checked where Will had concealed his knife and stun gun. He went over the fundamentals of closed quarters combat and reminded Will how to properly apply pressure to the carotid artery so that an opponent would pass out quickly.

“You’re nervous.” Will couldn’t keep the smile from his face.

“That’s ridiculous, I merely know how scattered your focus can be at times and I wanted to refresh-”

“You keep refreshing and you’re going to be covering how to tie my shoes next.” Will let the corner of his smile cock his head a little. He reached out, rubbing Hannibal’s thigh. “I’ve got this.”

“Of course you do, I’m confident in the training regimen I put you through.” Hannibal didn’t move the hand from his thigh, and his fingers flexed on the steering wheel of their rental car. He turned, eyebrows furrowed. “You need to check behind you. Your situational awareness can be cursory at best and if you aren’t considering all angles of attack-”

Will grabbed Hannibal’s face, leaning across the console until he was sharing breath with the doctor. Hannibal blinked, trying to rear back when he realized how close Will had gotten. Will shook his head, keeping his grip firm. “I think you need to work on your situational awareness, Dr. Lecter.”

Inhaling the scent of rosemary and sandalwood to take with him on his hunt, Will drew back, lightly slapping Hannibal’s face. “Now get out of here and go find a Cracker Barrel or something. Let me make you proud.”

Will didn’t bother looking back as he exited the car, he had work to do.

“Hey man, could you *uh* could you spot me some money for food?” Will kept his eyes wild and tugged at the grimy edge of his tank top. He’d carefully stained and torn it in places before ruffling his hair into a wild spill of tangles and curls. The scratches and bruises visible on his arms were a combination of self-inflicted wounds and a bit of makeup Hannibal carefully applied.

Parsons looked around as he closed up the cab of his truck. Dusk was falling and there were no other semis in the large back lot. He smiled, nodding at the wooded area that bordered the lot. “You wanna earn yourself some food, boy?”

Will hesitated, scratching at his arm again before nodding. “J-just my mouth?”

Parsons smiled, and Will could feel the coldness in it like ice on his spine. “Sure, beautiful, just your mouth.”

Will saw the outline of a knife tucked under Parsons’ jacket. If he timed it right, he’d be able to bring the bigger man down without giving him a chance to draw his blade.

“S-so…” Will rubbed the back of his neck as he led Parsons into the cover of the woods. He pulled his drop point blade from his pocket, ready to flip it open when they got deep enough into the woods. “H-how do you want me?”

“You’ll be wherever I fucking put you.”

A hand snagged the back of Will’s head and he was shoved into a tree. Will gasped, his vision going white as he connected with a branch. He stayed in his character, falling to the ground for a better striking position. “Wait! You don’t have to-”

“I’m gonna split you in two, you dumb little slut.” Will heard Matthew Brown’s voice and for a moment, fear shot through him. He took a deep breath, expelling it through his nose. It didn’t matter if it was Matthew Brown standing behind him, Hannibal had made him ready.

Will wheeled, ready to strike, but Parsons was faster. He knocked Will’s hand up and drove the blade of a small folding knife into Will’s left shoulder. Will cried out, falling backwards as the blade fell from his hand.

“You dirty fucking faggot,” Parsons growled, glancing at the knife. He swiped at Will again, forcing him to crumple backwards to avoid the blade.

If you’re brought to the ground, do not attempt to get up. Hannibal’s calm voice filled Will’s mind. He could swear he almost smell the sandalwood and rosemary. *Instead focus on taking their balance, bringing them down to your level. Much easier to pull them down than fight your way up.*

“What’d you think, you were gonna fucking rob me?” Parson kicked out into Will’s stomach. The boy groaned, collapsing into a heap. He pulled in another slow breath, he had the timing of the kick now. “I got bad fucking news for you, boy. I’m gonna make this last for days.”

Parsons drew back to kick him again and Will uncoiled. He grabbed Parson’s leg and used the momentum to pull him down. Parsons fell with a grunt, giving Will a chance to grab his blade and drive it deep into the bend in the older man’s knee. With a twist, he severed the anterior and posterior cruciate ligaments the way Hannibal taught him and smiled at the blood curdling scream that earned him.

“I’ve got bad news for you, *boy*,” Will hissed, jerking back the knife and burying it into the join between Parsons’ groin and thigh. “I don’t want your fucking money.”

Will stood, leaving the blade in the prone man before him. He smiled as he heaved a breath, feeling adrenaline surge through his body. He barely felt the stab wound. He wanted to howl. He wanted to claw and fuck. He wanted Hannibal.

Parsons tried to stand, but his ruined knee wouldn't bear his weight. Will watched with as the man used a tree to claw his way upright. "You fucking whore. This is gonna be slow. You're gonna beg."

With a shaking hand, Parsons grabbed the hilt of the blade still stuck in his leg and ripped it out. Will smiled, watching as arterial spray hit the leaves. "You shouldn't have done that."

"I'll fuck you with this fucking kn-knife. Y-you hear me?" Parsons stumbled, then collapsed, his blood gushing along the ground. Will walked forward, just out of range.

Leaning down to smile at the man, Will cocked his head. "Try it. You'll be dead in two minutes, you better hurry."

A twig snapped and Will jerked up, immediately assuming a defensive position. His shoulder ached when he raised his hands.

"If you were that alert five minutes ago you wouldn't have damaged your shoulder," Hannibal scolded, walking toward Will. He paused to shove Parsons' sagging body aside as he moved.

Will grinned. "You were supposed to go to Cracker Barrel."

"I looked up what a Cracker Barrel was on my phone and I assure you smothered biscuits were not in my future." Hannibal tore the collar of Will's shirt, baring the stab wound and poking at it with his fingers.

Will winced at the pressure. "You watched the whole thing?"

"This will need stitches."

"You couldn't stand the idea that I might need help, could you?"

Hannibal looked up at the scrapes on Will's face, strong fingers probing around painful edges. "There will be bruising, but I don't think you're concussed."

Will caught Hannibal's hand with his good one, pressing it into this face. "I'll put on a better show for you next time."

Hannibal looked up, eyes sharp. "Put on a show where you're not damaged."

Will dropped his eyes, frowning. "I'll get better, you'll be proud of-"

Hannibal pulled Will into a hug. Sharp pain flared in Will's shoulder, but he gripped back as hard as he could. It occurred to Will, when pressed into Hannibal's chest, how heavily the doctor was breathing. "It was… YOU were beautiful."

Burrowing his head into Hannibal's shoulder, Will drank in his scent – how had he ever lived without sandalwood and rosemary filling his lungs? Eventually, Hannibal pulled away, his hand rubbing at a blotch of blood on Will's cheek. "Come, let's prep him and take him to the burial site, I'd like to get you home to properly treat your shoulder."

Hannibal had thought to bring a first aid kit, packing Will's stab wound with gauze and carefully disinfecting the scratches around Will's face. When he was satisfied, he packed Will into the car and drove north.

For a half hour, Will blearily watched billboards for local attractions and restaurants fly by his window, head lolling along the headrest. Whatever pill Hannibal had given him made his head swim slightly, he felt like he was adrift in the ocean. Finally, he turned to look back to the cooler in the back seat, the one that was oddly clean, in spite of what Will knew lurked inside.

"That stuff you cut off of Parsons," Will tapped the cooler. "What are you going to do with it?"

"I was planning a roast, perhaps some cured bacon." Hannibal's eyes never left the road.

"We're EATING him?" Will scrunched his face. "Like, for dinner?"

"Not if you don't want to." Will watched Hannibal, there was a stiffness in his posture. Something buzzed in the back of Will's mind. This was a test. This was some sort of Hannibal-engineered compatibility test and his next answer, the answer Hannibal didn't seem to realize he was tensing to hear, would be important. For someone who knew so many ways to sever a spinal cord, Hannibal was surprisingly fragile whenever he allowed Will to glimpse real pieces of himself.

Will shrugged, making sure the gesture was exaggeratedly nonchalant. "It's gotta be better than aspic."

Hannibal chuckled, his shoulders sinking a fraction of an inch as he drove.

"So…" Will inspected an image his mind conjured: Hannibal calmly chewing on the sinew of one of his victims. There was something oddly appealing about the thought that buttoned up Dr. Lecter had such a primal side. "Have you always done that?"

"Yes."

"Huh, so that's your thing?" Will scratched at a smudge on the window. "Killers take mementos, right?"

"I suppose they do, typically."

"I took a different memento," Will said, still tapping at the window.

Hannibal glanced at him with an eyebrow raised. Will reached into the backseat, then tossed a white *Virginia Is for Lovers* t-shirt in Hannibal's lap. Hannibal held it up between two fingers, his lip curling slightly when he released it.

"Don't worry, it's in your size." Will patted Hannibal's leg.

"That was my concern, actually."

"Oh, don't get pissy," Will let his hand stay on Hannibal's thigh, squeezing lightly. "My memento will last longer than a meal"

"I feel a wave of relief."

Hannibal let his right hand fall from the steering wheel. It landed over Will's, his fingers curling softly under Will's palm. Will bit his lip and turned back to his window, watching the world fly by.

Technically, Will had followed Hannibal's instructions to the letter. He'd gone straight up to his bathroom, showered, and returned to Hannibal's bedroom for stitches and an overall check. It wasn't Will's fault that Hannibal hadn't mentioned getting dressed in that litany of orders.

When he appeared in Hannibal's bedroom, still glistening with droplets of shower water and only a fluffy towel tucked about his waist, Will smiled. The expression grew when Hannibal looked up his nylon suture kit and heaved an exasperated sigh.

"You could have put on pants."

Will raised an eyebrow. "I could have left the towel in my room."

Shaking his head, Hannibal patted the bed beside him. "Please sit, before you annoy me further and I decide to leave your wound to fester."

Will adjusted his towel before joining Hannibal on the bed. He winced when the doctor injected the spot near his shoulder wound. "If that's a roofie, I swear to god…"

"Bupivacaine liposome."

"Bless you."

Hannibal exhaled through his nose and leveled a flat glare at Will. "I have given you a local anesthetic to numb the pain, though I am beginning to regret my decision."

Hannibal poked at the wound, gauging Will's reaction. In under a minute, he couldn't feel Hannibal's finger tips. He watched as the doctor's mouth thinned into a line of concentration as he picked up a scalpel and debrided the uneven edges of the stab wound, pulling at the flesh to check for muscle damage.

“I think you might like hurting me,” Will said watching as fresh blood pooled in the wound. Hannibal’s hands stilled and he looked up. Will pursed his lips. “You like exerting control over me. You always smile when I listen to you, but your eyes get this sheen when I don’t…I think you’d like physically putting me in my place.”

“You must let me know where you got your degree in psychiatry.”

“Doesn’t take a doctor to see when someone’s excited.”

Hannibal huffed. “It does take a doctor to administer clean stitches.”

“I’m just saying, you get this look when I defy you, like you’re gonna eat me.” Will leaned in. “It’s kinda hot.”

“Don’t psychoanalyze me, Will. You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed.” Hannibal stabbed into his skin and pulled. Will watched as his flesh came back together, as if Kenneth Parsons had never touched him at all. The mark that would be left on his flesh now would be Hannibal’s, his steady hands forming the shape of his scar. Will felt his chest burn at the knowledge.

He watched Hannibal’s steady hands weave in and out of his skin. Ten mattress stitches later, Will’s wound was closed and Hannibal was carefully taping a gauze pad over the area. “There will be a scar, I’m afraid, but a small one. In time you’ll hardly notice it. He nicked your pectoralis major, but it shouldn’t affect mobility.”

Hannibal neatly stored the suture kit before grabbing his disinfectant and padding at the small cuts and scraps on Will’s cheek. Will leaned into the touch. “I’ll be 18 in three months, you know.”

Hannibal’s hands stilled for a moment before dropping altogether from Will’s face. “I did.”

Will stood as Hannibal busied himself with cleaning up his makeshift bedroom surgery. He wasn’t facing Will to see the towel fall, but he froze for a breath when he heard the cloth hit the floor. Turning, Hannibal put his hands up, but left them dangling midair, as if he were unsure of where to put them.

Will had been taught by a handsome killer to always press any advantage you were given. He used Hannibal’s hesitation to draw closer, fitting his hands to Hannibal’s jaw and tilting his head down into a kiss.

The fight Will expected never came, Hannibal sighed into his mouth, soft lips opening slightly under his own. Will made a pleased noise, licking at the seam of Hannibal’s mouth and pushing the doctor back so he could straddle him on the bed.

Firm hands found Will’s chest at that moment, careful to avoid the fresh set of stitches. He was gently but firmly pushed back until Hannibal could stare at him with what should have been a stern expression. “If you are three months from 18, then you are still too young to kiss me.”

The doctor sounded a little breathless, and Will debated simply leaping upon him and hoping for the best. He smiled when the doctor's eyes flicked down before resolutely turning to study the lamp on his nightstand. "Hannibal, I-"

"I've been quite clear about this, Will." Hannibal bent, eyes still resolutely to his right and groped for a few seconds until he found the towel. He straightened, holding the plush fabric aloft in Will's general direction. "A man would understand that."

Will closed his eyes in frustration. What did it matter? He'd killed in front of this man, gotten pointers on how to kill? They spent every possible second in each other's company – what good would three months do? Will snatched at the towel and threw it across the room. He stomped to the door and turned. Hannibal was sitting on his bed, hands clenched and eyes on the floor.

"I'll try again in three months, you know," Will hissed as he closed the door behind him. He heard a soft noise, and stopped, bending to listen at the shut door.

Hannibal was laughing, rueful little chuckles before softly, Will heard the doctor say, "I know."

Will slapped his hand on the door and grinned when he heard something drop in the room. "I HEARD THAT!"

The bed creaked and Will could picture Hannibal flopping back against his mattress, splayed among his legion of decorative pillows with one arm slung dramatically over his eyes. "GO TO BED, WILL."

Will pressed against the door, as if he could absorb the affection in Hannibal's voice through the wood. His smile grew as he shouted back. "I WAS TRYING TO, BUT YOU TOLD ME NO!"

He stood heading off to bed, the sound of Hannibal's full-throated laughter following him down the hall.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Will is bad at cooking, but pretty damn good at killing people.
Also, someone turns 18 next chapter...

The Killer Raises the Body Count

Chapter Summary

Will gets pretty damn good at killing and turns 18. Hannibal's in more trouble than he thinks...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will chewed thoughtfully. “I thought it would taste different?”

“In what way? Did you think it would cry out when you bit it?” Hannibal sliced a piece of the rib roast and chewed, observing Will with a wry smile.

“I dunno,” Will frowned and took another bite. “I just thought-”

“Finish chewing while you think,” Hannibal chided, dipping a new piece of Kenneth Parsons into a blackberry reduction. Will rolled his eyes but swallowed before he spoke again.

“I just…I feel like I shouldn’t like it.” Will poked his fork into the meat. “I feel like I should be more upset about this.”

“Will,” Hannibal’s voice was incredibly soft, it made the younger man still and look to the doctor with worried eyes. “If you don’t like it. If you don’t- If there are any qualms you have about dinner you don’t need to eat it, not to please me.”

Will watched Hannibal, he could feel something scratching at the back of his brain. It was cold and panicky, clawing at him light a frightened cat.

Fear.

Hannibal Lecter was afraid. Will let that sink into his bones as he watched the doctor, still as a stone at the head of his table, fingers clutched just a little too tight around his cutlery.

“Wish you’d told me that before I choked down the aspic last week,” Will grumbled, taking a large bite of his meat and making little pleased noises. He licked his lips after he swallowed. “When will the bacon be ready?”

“At least another week.” Hannibal smiled, his eyes glittering black as he watched Will swallow.

As it turned out, the next man stupid enough to follow Will Graham into the woods wasn't much of a fighter. Brett Sydmonds favored stun guns and binding his prey to the bed of his covered camper truck. Will managed to kick him in the chest and snap his neck before Hannibal had even finished parking the car.

They dug the burial site, somewhere in the Buchanan State Forest before driving south back into Maryland. Will fretted while he dug, this kill had felt hollow. There had been the initial thrill and blood lust, but without Hannibal's appraising gaze, or the knowledge that the doctor was watching just out of view, the high didn't last very long.

"You don't want to take something from him?" Will felt disappointment settle oily and cold in his gut as Hannibal rolled Sydmonds into the grave without producing his knife. He felt like he'd fucked up. Ruined the kill for both of them. He felt the urge to apologize, but he wasn't sure for what.

Hannibal shoveled some dirt over the body before looking up. "Amphetamines."

"Huh?"

"His body is littered with chemicals. He's not fit for our table."

Will dipped his head, kicking dirt over Sydmonds. He wanted to stab the corpse, tear into it for being such a lackluster offering. A hand caught Will's chin, raising it.

"I should have realized when I looked at the file. I'll find someone worthy of your skill next time," Hannibal's thumb rubbed at a speck of dirt on Will's chin, eyes impossibly fond. "Let's finish with…this. If we hurry we could pick up one of those disgusting slurps you like at the gas station we passed and warm up by the fire at home."

"Slurpees," Will said, letting his head rest heavy in Hannibal's hand. "You hate those."

"Yes, but they make you smile." Hannibal tightened his grip for a moment and Will let his eyes close, hoping to be pulled into a kiss. Instead, he was released to the cold night air. He didn't open his eyes until he heard the steady thud of dirt being shoveled into the grave. When he looked, Hannibal was smiling at him. "Besides, they're infinitely less annoying than those noise candies you love so."

Will grinned, grabbing a shovel. He was going to get the biggest Coke Slurpee he could, just to watch Hannibal's eyes dance in amused disapproval.

"Is this right?" It had to have been the ninth time he'd asked Hannibal, but the doctor dutifully moved his sauté pan from the flame and returned to Will's side. Will felt an electric fissure run through his spine when Hannibal notched his chin over Will's shoulder to examine his diced squash.

“It is exactly as good as it was three minutes ago,” Hannibal said dryly. The doctor’s chin dipped slightly, looking down. “What happened to all of your hideous t-shirts?”

“I decided I liked v-necks.” Will had, in fact, spent about three hours in the local Nordstrom finding the lowest cut t-shirts with the thinnest fabric possible. He was freezing constantly, but a few shivers were worth it when Hannibal couldn’t seem to look anywhere but his neck.

“What an interesting fashion choice,” Will could hear the amusement in Hannibal’s voice and leaned back a little just to see what the doctor would do.

Unfortunately, Hannibal chose *step back* instead of Will’s favored option *bend the cooking apprentice over the counter*. Will sighed, and Hannibal sighed right back. “We shall never eat again if you insist on taking this long with chopping.”

“When will you show me the other stuff?”

“Sautéing?”

Will rolled his eyes. “People stuff!”

“If you’d like to know how to prepare meat, first you must learn how to chop vegetables without calling me over to observe you every few minutes.” Hannibal went back to his sauté pan and moved it over the flame.

Will kept chopping, frowning at the squash before transferring the cubes to a foil-lined pan and drizzling them with one of Hannibal’s infused olive oils. He watched as Hannibal poured the contents of the sauté pan into a Vitamix and blended it smooth. Will walked over to the stove, leaning into Hannibal’s space. “I really do want to learn.”

Hannibal turned and smiled. He started to raise a hand to Will’s face but stopped, his eyes widening. Will opened his mouth to ask what was wrong when he was shoved backwards hard. Hannibal snatched at Will’s waist, and Will noticed as he careened toward the floor that the tea towel tucked into his apron was on fire. Hannibal tossed the flaming fabric into the sink and turned on the water.

Will was no longer on fire, but that didn’t stop flames from licking up his cheeks. He glared at the floor, refusing to look up when Hannibal crouched in front of him and offered him a hand. With a huff, Hannibal lowered himself on the ground and slung an arm around Will’s shoulders, bringing him close. “Rule One – keep precious things away from flames.”

Will snorted, letting Hannibal guide his head to his shoulder. After a moment, strong fingers sank into Will’s hair, rubbing at the base of his skull. “Perhaps we’ll start our lessons with cold soups, maybe an ice cream.”

Will screwed his eyes shut and laughed, still flushed with embarrassment, but not quite as mortified with Hannibal wrapped around him.

Marcus Daniels did most of the work for Will.

Will had only been sitting at Marcus' preferred hunting grounds for 20 minutes when the man sidled up to Will and offered to buy him a drink. Will had enthusiastically agreed, he hadn't even needed the fake ID Hannibal had procured for him, and watched as Marcus left their table to get their drinks. Will noted with some dismay that Daniels wasn't even very subtle, clearly doctoring Will's drink at the bar in plain view. Still, it wouldn't do to give the man a lecture on the art of misdirection, so Will gulped down the drink and began slurring his speech and making the wide loopy gestures with increasingly heavy limbs. Will let Marcus gather him up and lead him out of the bar, letting his head loll back on the man's shoulder so he could wink at Hannibal, ensconced in a corner booth, grimacing at the house red.

Will was dead weight when Marcus attempted to wrestle him out of the car and to his rowhouse, but the man managed it huffing all the way. When he was finally flopped onto the bed, Will opened his eyes. The mattress was covered with a tarp and plastic sheeting draped around the walls.

"Wow, you watched a lot of Dexter, huh?" Will grinned when Marcus jumped, dropping a knife that was in his hands.

"Wh-"

"You're kinda shit at this, Marcus, how much GHB did you put in that drink?" Marcus' eyes widened and he made a gesture at Will, who waved him off dismissively. "Doesn't matter, you won't do it again."

Will lunged, bashing Marcus' head into a plastic covered end table and then backing off. He watched as the man got to his feet, wobbly, but furious, and charged at Will. With a smile, Will side-stepped, kicking the man's legs out from under him.

Marcus crashed down, howling in fury as he rounded and struggled to stand. Blood was dripping in the man's eyes, it would take seconds to end it. When Marcus ran at him again, Will dodged, this time using the man's momentum to flip him over and dislocate his shoulder. Will removed a flip knife from his pocket, but twirled it instead of plunging it into the prone man.

"Will."

The boy turned to see Hannibal leaning against the door, smiling softly.

"I'd like to get back to the house by midnight."

Marcus got to his knees and turned to Hannibal, reaching his working arm toward the doctor. Will lunged, rolling Marcus onto his stomach before slitting his throat.

"Happy?" Will asked, stepping over the pool of blood.

“Yes,” replied Hannibal with a wink. “Would you like ham hocks or ossobuco this week?”

Will marched down the stairs rubbing at his eyes. The nightmares had come for him again, and he’d had a fitful sleep. “Hannibal? Could you make s-”

Will squinted, then came closer to the man offering him Turkish coffee. Instead of his customary sweater, Hannibal was wearing a t-shirt. A slightly small t-shirt, with the phrase *Virginia Is for Lovers* stretched over his powerful chest. Will blinked before raising both brows at Hannibal.

“It was too warm for a sweater this morning,” Hannibal explained, fitting the coffee mug into Will’s hand before turning back to the eggs. “The shakshuka will be ready in 10 minutes. Just enough time for you to brush your hair.”

Will gulped the coffee and ran up the stairs, grinning the whole way.

Gordon Whitlock proved so little of a challenge that Will and Hannibal were able to wrap up the organ extraction and body disposal by nine.

“I need a challenge, these guys are all easy pickins.” Will said swinging his feet as he sat on the kitchen counter.

“You’ll get one if you don’t get off my clean counter tops,” Hannibal said without looking over his shoulder. Will sighed, hopping down to mill about as Hannibal unpacked the cooler of meat.

“Want to watch a movie?” Will asked as they stored the kidneys and liver.

Hannibal looked up from his saran wrap. “I have little interest in the dud and his ugly rug.”

“The DUDE,” Will corrected with a smile. “And that rug really tied the room together.”

“It did not,” Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “Though that film offered enlightening insight into your sartorial choices.”

Will shook his head. “Come on, I’ve talked about death in Italian and listened to opera forever. You can’t give me one little love story and some popcorn?”

Hannibal tilted his head. “And what do you consider a love story?”

Will waggled his eyebrows. “Make the popcorn and find out.”

“You find the film and I’ll make a charcuterie with the rest Mr. Daniels.” Will opened his mouth but Hannibal held up a hand. “I will, of course, incorporate popcorn.”

Will grinned, snagging Hannibal’s tablet and downloading *Stoker*.

“I know you planned this,” Will grumbled into his protein scramble. He sullenly watched as Hannibal neatly tucked papers into his briefcase.

“I did not,” Hannibal said. “But to be honored by my peers at a conference is something I don’t wish to pass up.”

“It’s my birthday.”

“I did ask you to come along,” Hannibal leaned over the counter to catch Will’s eye. “I don’t think you’ll find much to thrill you at the American Academy of Clinical Psychiatrists' Psychiatry Update, but Las Vegas does have many charms, I’ve been told.”

“The only place I wanted to be this weekend was in bed.”

Hannibal patted Will’s forearm. “Rest would be a good idea, you don’t get enough sleep.”

“I hate you.” Will stabbed at a piece of sausage. “And psychiatry.”

“Yes, well, one of your problems will be gone for the weekend,” Hannibal paused at the doorway, his fingers tapping lightly on the jamb. After a moment, they stilled. “I could change my flight, get another ticket.”

“Book another hotel room?”

“Of course.”

“I’d come if I could stay in your room.”

“I have a feeling I’d miss my lecture and the awards ceremony.” Hannibal tugged on a strand of Will’s hair. “I could take you to dinner, perhaps we could-”

“No.” Will snarled and shook his head. “I’m just going to sulk here, and send you miserable texts all weekend, so you know you ruined my birthday.”

“How incredibly mature,” Hannibal deadpanned, walking around the kitchen island to rub Will’s shoulder. “And I was planning on giving you something you’ve been asking for.”

“Finally.” Will automatically reached for Hannibal’s belt only to be slapped away by a manila folder.

“A challenge, I believe, was your request.” Hannibal stepped back a bit and presented the folder to Will.

Will sighed, taking the folder and tossing it on the counter without a glance. “Not what I wanted tonight.”

“I am keenly aware of your wants.”

“Then why deny them?”

“Why rush them?”

“You’re fucking impossible and I hope the conference only has cold buffet food and Pop Rocks.” Hannibal smiled at Will’s sulk, which only made Will feel more spiteful. “I’m going to sleep in your bed all weekend and do dirty things to myself – THINGS YOU SHOULD BE DOING.”

“Try to avoid staining the duvet, it’s imported and difficult to clean.” Hannibal glanced down when his phone pinged and walked to the hallway, where his bag was waiting. Will followed a few steps behind, scuffing his heels just to make the annoying *squeak* Hannibal hated. The doctor turned. “Oh, and Will?”

Before a spiteful answer could form in his brain, Will was grabbed and pressed against the wall by the front door. He flailed, gripping onto Hannibal, who seemed to be the only steady source of support in the room. The doctor slotted himself between Will’s legs and smiled a breath before taking Will’s mouth.

The kiss was hungry, Hannibal licking into Will’s mouth and devouring him whole. Strong hands threaded into his hair as Hannibal sweetly pulled at Will’s bottom lip before shifting to fit their mouths together. Will made a surprised noise, clawing at the thick suit fabric on Hannibal’s shoulders and the doctor sucked on his tongue. His other hand grabbed at Hannibal’s hair, ruffling the gel as Will tried to drag the man before him closer. It felt like a consummation, his whole body running hot and cold and completely at the mercy of Hannibal Lecter.

When Hannibal pulled back his hair was sticking up and messy. He grinned at Will, one hand tracing along his cheek. Hannibal’s bloody eyes were bright and feral, Will felt pinned by them. “Will you do me the honor of going to dinner with me upon my return?”

Will panted, he knew words were expected of him, but he had no idea what any of them were. Hannibal merely smiled, bending to take Will’s bottom lip in his teeth and bite down until the boy moaned. Hannibal released him and rubbed his nose along the knob of Will’s jaw, inhaling deeply. “No need to answer now, but I do look forward to your eventual decision. Have a happy birthday, Will.”

The door had closed and the uber gone before Will could think to move. He stood staring at the antlers on the far side of the wall, his heart pounding and his throat dry.

That fucking bastard.

Will laughed, letting his head fall back against the wall and bringing his hand up to feel his slick lips. When his legs felt solid beneath him again, Will stood, already planning the myriad of increasingly vulgar selfies he was going to be sending Hannibal this weekend.

He refilled his coffee when the manila folder caught his eye. It wasn't like he was getting laid this weekend, he might as well study up. Will pulled the file over to his seat and flipped it open.

He scoffed.

This tiny blond didn't look so tough. All dressed up in a fancy suit and his mouth drawn in a severe line, he looked like a fragile little target, hardly worth the time. Will picked up Hannibal's report, skimming the first lines, there must be some reason Hannibal found Mason Verger so interesting.

Chapter End Notes

So...I finished writing over Thanksgiving, so I can now tell you that the story is definitely 10 chapters and an epilogue. No need to worry about this being a WIP anymore! Thank you all for having faith in me that I'd finish in time!

Next Up:
Meet Mason Verger - he's the worst! Also, salacious selfies, a proper date, and Pop Rocks.

The Killer Stalks His Prey

Chapter Summary

Will meets Mason Verger, he's not impressed. Hannibal and Will go on a date.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will looked up from the Verger file. He'd been making notes on Verger all weekend, dissecting his personality, proposing ways to get into Mason's circle, and imagining some truly creative kills for him. Will had even researched a few recipes he thought would go well with this pig of a man. His bloody reverie was broken when he heard the sound of a car door shutting.

Hannibal was home.

Excitement built in the base of Will's spine, he could feel his heartbeat increase as he toed off his shoes and slipped out of the kitchen. He padded into the study to wait. Will pulled a packet from his pocket, tearing it open as he heard the lock in the foyer turn.

Hannibal's solid steps filled the hallway. They paused, and Will could picture Hannibal's small frown as he looked around.

"Will?"

Will listened as Hannibal's steps grew closer, into the kitchen.

"Will, I'm home." Though his voice was as even as ever, Will picked out the little lilt of disappointment. Hannibal had wanted Will to meet him at the door. And while Will had spent a few hours thinking about doing just that, he'd decided on a different welcome home.

He waited until Hannibal moved to the stairs before he poured half the packet of Pop Rocks into his mouth, holding his maw wide to amplify the sound. Will knew the second Hannibal heard the noise. There was a squeak when the doctor turned hard on his toe to race the study, then silence.

Will grinned, closing his mouth and sliding back into the hallway on careful feet – Hannibal had taken off his shoes too. Heart pounding, Will waited in the dark corner by the stairwell until he heard the squeak of the third floorboard by the shelf that held the classics.

He took off then, racing up the stairs and hearing the study door thrown open behind him as Hannibal's keen ears picked out the sound of Will's foot hitting the loose board on the fifth stair. He made it to the top of the stairs and dumped the rest of the Pop Rocks into his

mouth, calling Hannibal to him with each crackle. Crouching so he was poised to catch Hannibal's knees the second the man hit the top step, Will waited.

And waited.

With a small frown, Will peered around the corner to look down the stairs. Had Hannibal been angry? Will was so sure he'd enjoy the chase. The stairs were empty and Will felt a cold shard in his chest. Hannibal hadn't chased him. He'd seen the trail and just dismissed him. The air felt thick around him, the selfies, the dumb flirty texts – he'd overplayed his hand.

"What have I told you about situational awareness, Will?" Will grinned, throwing an elbow behind him that was caught as he was flipped to the ground. Hannibal was on top of him, tie off and a smudge on the neck of his blue checked dress shirt. Will glanced behind Hannibal to the open window in the spare bedroom.

"DID YOU CLIMB IN THE WINDOW?" Will couldn't control the laughter bubbling from his chest. He could see Hannibal smiling above him, sharp teeth peeking from his lips. Will let the doctor weigh him down, Hannibal's wide grin blurring as tears formed in Will's eyes.

"Did you think I'd walk into an ambush?" Hannibal moved closer, pressing Will's arms above his head. "Such an obvious lure, Will…"

Hannibal's lips were centimeters from Will's. The younger man smiled, tilting his chin up in invitation. "And it didn't work at all."

Hannibal shook his head slightly before dipping down and sealing their mouths together. Will was just licking along Hannibal's tongue, coaxing the doctor closer with a roll of his hips when Hannibal reared back. "What did you put in your mouth?"

"Huh?" Will craned his head, but Hannibal held him firm. The doctor was making horrified faces, releasing Will's arms to grab at his chin and examine the boy's mouth.

"The chemicals have leached into your system, your tongue is discolored."

"It's blue raspberry!"

Hannibal stood, looking at Will as if he'd just invoked some sort of evil spirit. "What on earth is a…*blue raspberry*?"

Will rolled his eyes. "Jesus, I'll brush my teeth, OK?"

Hannibal rolled his neck and straightened his waistcoat before offering Will a hand up. "When you're done scrubbing…whatever that was from your mouth, we need to have a talk about proper cellular phone etiquette."

Will leaned in, frowning when Hannibal merely raised an eyebrow instead of closing the distance between them. He winced as Hannibal's expression turned stern before grumbling, "I was just playing around."

Hannibal huffed, turning to march downstairs. “I could barely look at my phone for fear yet another half-naked image would pop up on my screen.”

Will grinned. He had started out sending sad, pouting selfies, bottom lip jutting and eyes baleful. But after an hour, that got boring. The next selfie was sultry, eyes hooded, lips licked and parted, angled so the viewer got a fairly good glimpse of Will’s neck and down the deep v of his shirt. Hannibal’s response of *please sweep the floors in the kitchen, what were you eating?* had not been the reaction he was looking for.

The next morning, after a peaceful night sleeping in a bed that smelled of sandalwood and rosemary, Will had clicked a quick picture of himself tangled in Hannibal’s sheets – shirtless and sleep rumpled. Hannibal had responded with *make the bed when you’re done, please*.

That, Will had taken as a challenge. He raided Hannibal’s closet, pulling out his favorite of the doctor’s ties – a blue and bronze paisley silk – and traipsing back to the bed. He splayed himself across Hannibal’s duvet, chest bare, tie clutched between his teeth with the tail trailing down his bare stomach to the v in his hips. The picture cropped just enough to suggest filthy things and surely get a response from Hannibal.

He got none.

In hindsight, it had probably been childish to send the next photo, but he had really expected at least a reprimand. The final selfie was Will, just out of the shower, eyes smiling as he tilted his chin up at the lens – his pert ass perfectly reflected in Hannibal’s bathroom mirror behind him. *Trying to find a good angle – how’s this one?* he’d asked. Hannibal’s text came in seconds *We will discuss this when I get home, cease or I will block this number*. Will had rather hoped *discuss* was going to involve being bent over Hannibal’s knee and told what a bad boy he was. But yet again, Hannibal decided that talking Will to death would be the most effective punishment.

“You know,” Will tried for flirty, as he followed Hannibal down the stairs and watched the doctor gather his carryon. “You could have just sent some selfies back.”

Hannibal glanced up at Will, mouth drawn into a moue. “What about me implies that I take sexually explicit selfies to send to a man who has yet to accept my dinner invitation?”

Will grinned. “I’m no psychiatrist, but don’t you think dirty selfies are an implied *yes* to dinner?”

“I think they’re a sign that you’re not taking an adult relationship seriously,” Hannibal sounded so prim as he marched past Will on the stairs.

“Meaning?”

“Meaning, I believe one date per explicit selfie should give us adequate time to acclimate ourselves to the shift in our relationship dynamic.” Hannibal looked over his shoulder. “And perhaps give you time to assess your intentions.”

“MY INTENTIONS! You can’t be serious,” Will ran after Hannibal, scowling when the doctor rounded on him at the second-floor landing. “You practically fucked me against the doorway when you left!”

“And clearly that was a mistake.” Hannibal faltered for half a heartbeat, and Will could swear his cheeks turned pink. “I want us to have a foundation that hasn’t been built off adolescent hormones or capricious behavior.”

Will frowned as Hannibal opened his bedroom door and sighed at the decidedly unmade bed. But a thought flicked through Will’s mind, making him smile. “Did you delete them?”

“They were unsolicited.” Hannibal said, taking a step into his bedroom.

Will smiled. “Did you delete them?”

Hannibal turned to glance at Will wearily. “Yet another example of your immaturity.”

Will extended his hand. “Give me your phone.”

Hannibal’s mouth thinned. He took a step away from Will. “One dinner and conversation for every selfie you sent, Will. Please be ready by eight and please wear a suit.”

Will sagged, manfully keeping his eyes from rolling. “How many dates am I looking at, here, Hannibal?”

“How many pictures did you send, Will?”

Will’s brow furrowed. “They weren’t all dirty!”

Hannibal straightened, looking amused. “I have very delicate sensibilities.”

Will’s mouth curled into a smirk. “And a very tired hand, I bet.”

Hannibal’s eyes flashed, before he closed the door in Will’s face.

Will waited at the bottom of the steps, neatly shaved, gelled, fidgeting with his tie. The navy suit Hannibal bought him felt just a little tight as he slipped it on, but Will suspected that it was more Hannibal’s preference than a mistake in sizing. He’d selected a grey oxford to go with the suit, smiling when the combination made his eyes look stormy and dark. He was going for sexy and debonair, after all.

Though he had learned to knot a tie in high school when he’d dated that Baptist girl who’d insisted on taking him to Sunday services, Will found the small twist at his throat looked meager in comparison to the rest of his finery. Hannibal had once told him he preferred Windsor knots for ties, and Will had YouTubed the instructions. He’d managed to

very nearly bind himself into a gordian knot several times before he finally wrestled the strip of navy silk with the fine silver threads running through it into submission.

He waited now, at the base of the stairs, fingering the thicker knot at the base of his throat and trying not to sweat through his suit.

The moment the clock in the study chimed, Hannibal appeared at the top of the stairs. The man wore slim black trousers, gleaming leather brogues, a crisp white shirt, and a wine-colored dinner jacket with gold brocade stitching and a black tuxedo collar. An ascot of wine-colored silk was knotted at the base of Hannibal's throat, making Hannibal look like the world's oldest and fussiest vampire. Honestly, Will should have thought Hannibal looked ridiculous. If his father had been there, and sober, he would have said Hannibal *looked so stuck up, he'd drown in a rainstorm*. And it might be true, but lord did Hannibal cut a pretty picture in his peacock finery. Will's mouth was dry as he thought about what that fine jacket would feel like under his fingers.

Hannibal seemed to time his steps down the stairs with all eight of the clock's chimes, arriving before Will with a small smile. "You are a vision."

"Vision, huh?" Will ducked his head, gazing up at Hannibal from beneath his lashes. "Like Moses seeing the promised land or like Cassandra seeing the fall of Troy?"

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, considering. "I suppose that depends on how the evening goes."

"You, uh, you look-" The word *fuckable* found its way to the tip of Will's tongue and he stuttered to a halt. That was probably not what Hannibal wanted to hear. "You're uh, you're beautiful."

Hannibal's started at the compliment, before smiling broadly. He leaned closer to Will, one hand falling on Will's collar while the other wrapped around his tie, tugging softly right and left before smoothing the fabric down Will's chest.

Will felt himself blush. "Damn, I thought my tie was straight."

"It was." Hannibal smiled, holding the door open for Will.

Will felt a small thrill when Hannibal pulled up to Charleston and handed his keys to the valet. Hannibal had mentioned the restaurant several times in passing and Will was anxious to see what kind of fine dining establishment could impress the persnickety doctor.

Will looked down, fiddling with his tie when Hannibal held the door for him. He felt a warm weight settle at the base of his spine, Hannibal's hand rubbing small circles over the fabric of Will's coat.

“Shoulders back, don’t fidget,” Hannibal whispered, ushering Will through the glass doors. “You will have to get used to scrutiny if you plan on looking so handsome.”

Will straightened, puffing his chest a little as Hannibal took his arm. He was ushered to a small table next to the open kitchen, where a small blonde woman waved to Hannibal as they sat.

“Is that the chef?”

“Chef and owner, yes. I’ll introduce you after our meal.”

Will noted that Hannibal waited for Will to take his seat before sitting down, and ordered drinks. Will frowned when Hannibal indicated that his companion would be having sparkling water, but he supposed it was only fair, considering the liquor laws. Will scanned the menu and grinned to himself, the fact that there were meats and words he recognized made the restaurant seem almost low-end, there wasn’t one aspic in sight.

“OK, so,” Will said as soon as the waiter left to retrieve the drinks. “I have a plan for Verger.”

Hannibal held up a hand. “We’re supposed to be on a date, Will.”

“OK.”

“Would you talk about your plans to murder someone on a date?”

“With you, yes.”

Hannibal sighed. “This is an exercise to explore each other’s personalities, to reinforce the bond we already share.”

“So what, treat this like a first date?”

“It is a first date.” Hannibal nodded to the waiter when he returned with his Hermitage Blanc and Will’s sparkling water.

As soon as the server left, Will held his glass aloft. “Hi, I’m Will. I like long walks on the beach, fly fishing, reading by the fire, and sweeping kick takedowns followed by asphyxiation. What are you into?”

Hannibal glared over the lip of his wine glass. “You’re not taking this seriously.”

“Why should I? I know what I want.” Will popped the amuse bouche into his mouth. “At this point I’m just running out the clock until you decide you’re ready.”

“You feel no need to explore common interests?”

“I mean, we share a hobby, that’s a good start, yeah?” Will ran his shoe along Hannibal’s calf just to watch his hold on the stem of the wine glass stiffen. “Also, I’ve got a thing for older guys with sharp cheekbones and withering long-suffering glares.”

Hannibal shifted his leg slightly away, eyebrow raised. “Where do you see this going?”

“The bedroom.”

“Will, please.” Hannibal had adopted that drained look Will hated so. The boy dropped his foot back to the ground and took a sip of his water. “What is your goal here?”

“My goal, is to get you to stop looking at me like I’m going to sprint for the hills if you don’t keep me leashed.” Will picked up his menu, but regarded Hannibal over the paper. “Oh, I also want a dog.”

“A dog?”

Will shrugged. “I could never have one, always wanted one…or two.”

“Our home is not very dog friendly.” Hannibal’s tone indicated that the man had confused the word *dog* with *nuclear bomb*, but Will let it go.

“You housetrained me, a dog has to be more obedient.” Will raised an eyebrow.

“True.” Hannibal said, dropping his eyes back to the menu and picking up his wine. “I’m thinking about the wild rockfish ceviche and grilled French quail. What interests you?”

“Wild Lithuanian rump roast,” Will grinned to himself when Hannibal coughed delicately and sat his wine aside.

“This is a lot more comprehensive than the FBI files,” Will said as he settled by the fire in the study. Hannibal had thrown a fit the first time Will had tossed cushions from the settee by the fire so he could study in the warmth. Hannibal had moved a hard-backed chair by the fire, which Will promptly ignored, instead sitting on the wooden floor and glaring at the book in front of him. After a month of shifting uncomfortably on the floorboards as Hannibal studiously ignored him in his Eames leather lounger, a compromise appeared in the hall closet.

Hannibal called it a pouf, and when Will had gleefully thanked him for the beanbag chair the doctor turned a sickly pale color. It was agreed the furniture in question was a wolf fur pouf, and that it would be kept in the hall closet, behind the coats and the cleaning supplies, when not in use.

Will shifted on the pouf to hold the folder up. “Where’d you get all this?”

The file contained a detailed biography and a few family pictures, a rarity for Will who usually had to guess what made his prey tick. Mason Verger posed no such challenge.

Born to one of the richest families in Baltimore, Mason Verger was a multi-millionaire before he could hold his head upright. The rest was the typical poor little rich boy tale of

nannies, over-indulgence, and consequence free living. While that rarely makes for a good man in general, Mason had been a special case.

At the age of seven, Mason's nanny was rushed to the hospital. When she was finally released, missing two fingers on her right hand and with a permanent limp, a problem was found with her visa and the government deported her back to Belarus. At ten, Mason was taken from the Gilman School and given a private tutor after an incident that resulted in three private settlements and seven nondisclosure agreements. At sixteen, a Baltimore police officer reported finding the body of a missing boy in Mason's car, but charges were dropped when Molson Verger explained that his son's car had been stolen from the property just that very morning.

This year, however, Mason's run of good luck seemed to be running out. First, an incident at a schoolyard resulted in charges being filed that even Molson couldn't make go away. Though Molson couldn't buy the DA, it seemed the judge had no such moral convictions. 11 counts of sexual abuse of a minor were minimized to one count of sexual solicitation of a minor, three counts of visual surveillance with prurient intent, and a final two counts of hiring minor for prohibited purpose. For anyone else, that would have meant at least a few years behind bars. But the judge could see Mason was a good boy, and very sorry for what he'd done. It would be a shame to ruin the life of one so young just before his 18th birthday.

Mason was granted probation before judgement. He never pleaded guilty, he just had to promise to be a good boy for five years, and perform 500 hours of community service. Mason had immediately volunteered at a local animal shelter, but was asked to leave because they had "run out of jobs for him". To keep his son on the up-and-up, Molson decided to open a camp at the Verger estate for disadvantage and vulnerable youths. Kids were cycled in and out of the Verger property, shown the slaughterhouses, allowed to pet the horses, and given all the candy they could eat. Mason would personally play with the ones he found interesting at the end of every week. The state supervisors never reported any problems, but most had bought new cars or homes in the last year.

Will ran his hand over a picture of the Verger estate that was included with the file.

"His sister, Margot, is my patient." Hannibal looked up from his copy of *Prometheus Bound*.

Will whistled lowly. "I'd need a shrink too if I had to deal with this."

"She was sent to me for what her father deemed *troubling proclivities*."

Will turned, brow furrowed. "She touches kids too?"

"No, she's a lesbian."

"Wait." Will scoffed. "Mason's background has boys and girls listed."

"As the only male heir of Molson Verger, Mason's…*quirks* have been excused or ignored whenever possible." Hannibal put his book down. "And with Verger money, it's

always possible."

"Un-fucking-believable."

"Money offers both beautiful and ugly advantages in this world, Will."

"This isn't buying an overpriced chair." Hannibal sneered when Will gestured at the Eames. Will ignored him and looked at the file. "It's not about male or female, it's about fear for him. He wants pain and terror."

"Correct."

"The sister."

"Yes?"

Will looked up, eyes sad. "How long?"

Hannibal's mouth drew tight. "Long enough that she's no longer hysterical when talking about it. I've been seeing her a year, but I would wager Mason has had her for a plaything since early childhood. That's why I encouraged her to kill him, I felt it would be therapeutic for her."

"What happened?"

"From my understanding Margot's failure was one of happenstance rather than nerve. Her father was home at the time and she was unaware. Now she sees me biweekly and is watched too carefully to make another attempt." Hannibal sat forward in his chair, reaching out to ruffle the curls on Will's head. "But Margot's failure shall be your triumph."

"I want this one to last. I want it to take ages." Will looked at the picture, the smug smile and the vacant eyes that held no humanity, and resisted the urge to tear it to pieces.

"With a pathology like Mason's I doubt you'll be able to provoke fear, if that's what you're after. Better just to kill him quickly and give him no chance for showboating," Hannibal's fingers ran through Will's hair in soothing strokes. "I believe you told me you had a plan?"

Will held up the file. "Camps need volunteers. I'm sure if I got a recommendation from a prominent psychiatrist, I'd be a shoe-in."

"The grand plan you've been working on since I left you is to get a job chasing children?"

Will snatched at Hannibal's wrist and yanked, pulling the doctor from the edge of his chair and onto the pouf. He tried not to laugh too loudly at Hannibal's undignified sprawl as he tried to right himself, but used the older man's unbalance to pull him close and steal a kiss. Hannibal's hand surged up grabbing Will's throat and tossing him to the floor. Will laughed when Hannibal fell atop him, elbowing the older man in the gut and wriggling free.

They sparred in front of the flames, grappling for holds and both laughing when they were pinned. Mason's file lay abandoned by the bookcase, a monster to be slayed another day. Finally, Will managed to throw Hannibal into the pouf and leap on top of him. Hannibal seemed to settle after that, sprawled in Will's arms cocooned by the stuffing, allowing himself to be kissed into submission.

"Did you let me win?" Will asked licking at Hannibal's mouth.

"I assure you, Will. I'm utterly conquered," Hannibal whispered.

Getting the job had taken one phone call from Hannibal. It took longer for Will to convince Hannibal that there was no way he could show up at the Verger estate driving a Bentley. Will had gone out with a blank check and returned home with a beige Toyota Camry with a rusted wheel well. Hannibal had insisted the he park it down the block, far enough away that the neighbors wouldn't associate it with their home.

He had argued with Hannibal that the car was budget friendly and plenty reliable – the exact kind of car a high school graduate looking for college credit volunteer work would be driving. But now, as it rattled and shook up the long driveway of the Verger servant's entrance, Will longed for the smooth ride of the Bentley.

The Verger Estate, even from the back, was formidable. Up until now Will had thought Hannibal's home was the swankiest place in existence, but Hannibal's entire property could fit inside the giant brick building looming before him with room to spare for a few more homes. It had an honest-to-god parapet and Will wondered what type of dragon guarded it.

Parking in a lot, Will wandered along the brick façade, pretending to search for the camp office as he noted the location of security cameras and the fact that armed guards seemed to be walking around the gated perimeter of the grounds.

Interesting.

Will peered into a large arched opening and found a stable. Horses nickered softly, a few kicking at the stall doors to get the newcomer's attention. Will walked up to a bay and stroked its nose.

"Careful, she bites," Will turned to see a young woman in formal riding attire standing behind him. "Everything here bites."

"O-oh I-I'm s-sorry," Will ducked his head and huffed as he rubbed the back of his head. Hannibal had helped he work up the perfect profile for a Verger victim, someone full of fear and insecurity for Mason to sink his teeth into. "I-I was j-just-"

"You're Hannibal's Will, he mentioned you had an interest in Mason's…work." The girl said, adjusting the seam on her red riding coat as she looked him over. She seemed to consider him before offering her gloved hand. Bruises peaked out from the mouth of the

black leather, purpling her pale skin. When she finally extended her hand and met his eyes, Will was struck with the age behind them. She couldn't have been more than 17, but her eyes spoke of years of terror and abuse. "Margot Verger."

"It's nice to meet you," Will took her hand, mindful of his grip lest the bruises on her wrists ran along her hand as well. "I *uh* I'm afraid I'm a bit lost."

Margot nodded, pointing at a white door along the far end of the building. "That's the office, you'll find the kids and the staff in there."

Will nodded and turned to leave, but a strong hand grabbed Will's forearm. "If Mason offers you a chocolate, politely refuse."

"W-why?"

Margot's mouth twitched and she moved deeper into the stable, a limp in her gait.

Evidently, Mason Verger rarely showed up to play with the children. The two women running the camp seemed utterly relieved to impart that bit of knowledge on Will. He was given a group five kids and told to make macaroni crafts until noon, and then after lunch take them to the stables and stock pen to see the animals.

Not exactly the day he'd planned, but Will was game to help a few kids make terrifying macaroni masks. He based his off of the painting of Cronus that Hannibal had in the study. He was worried it would frighten Michael, who was only six, but apparently a macaroni maw and sparkly teeth weren't quite as terrifying as the Goya that Will hated looking at.

At lunch, while the kids ate in the larger group, Will snuck off. He walked the grounds, counting guards and noting camera locations on buildings as he pretended to smoke. Hannibal would have a fit when he smelled the acrid scent on Will's jacket, but the intel he was getting would make up for it.

The Vergers, it seemed, were a bit on the paranoid side. Will had a sinking feeling the cameras, especially those he saw in the tree line around the estate's forest were there to help Mason find people, not keep people from breaching the gates.

"Smoking is a nasty habit for nasty people. That's what Papa says."

Will froze, immediately hunching his shoulders and adopting the wide-eyed terrified face he'd spent a few weeks working on. He spun to see Verger not ten feet from him, dressed in a black overcoat with a fur collar, a lavender shirt and blue tie peeking from beneath. Wryly, Will observed that Mason and Hannibal likely shared a tailor. There couldn't be too many people in Maryland who put together custom outfits like these.

"I *uh* I'm t-trying to q-quit," Will stammered, keeping his eyes low.

“I’ll help you.” Mason closed the distance between them and yanked the smoke from Will’s lips. He took a drag before stubbing it out on the ground. “What business do you have here other than littering on my grounds? Carlo? Pick that up.”

A man appeared from the tree line, older than Mason, heavily muscled and rough featured. Hired muscle, without a shadow of a doubt. The man snorted through his nose before picking up the butt and putting it in his pocket. He retreated back a few feet, waiting to be summoned again.

“I work at the camp,” Will kept his eyes moving and his body tense. A frightened little creature just perfect for Mason to toy with.

“Ah the children, cute little critters, aren’t they? It’s too bad about them.” Mason’s voice had a soft atonal lilt. It would be childish if it weren’t for those vacant hollow eyes.

“W-what about them?”

“Well they haven’t a chance, do they? They’re born in the gutter, and we let them play with the pigs, but the best they can hope for is a foster family that won’t touch them too much and maybe a job in the stockyards.”

Will blinked. “If they work hard, they c-could.”

“They’re not the right stock, Mr. Graham.”

“They’re just kids.”

“Breeding is important to my father. Papa can tell you the genetic makeup of a pig by feeling his face. Or he could, before little Margot’s antics left him bed ridden.” Mason moved with frightening speed, snatching Will’s face in a cold hand. Will gasped, struggling briefly to break the hold before sinking into the grip with a terrified, submissive sound. “Breeding is important in my family. A pretty face isn’t necessarily the sign of good stock, Mr. Graham.”

“People aren’t p-pigs.”

Mason’s grip tightened. “No, they’re not nearly as useful, are they?”

When Mason released his hold, Will stumbled back, making a show of falling in his desperation to get away. Mason watched him with a broad smile that didn’t reach his eyes. Nothing, it seemed, reached Mason’s eyes; Will wondered if he’d ever felt anything. Mason clapped, rubbing his hands together.

“I like you, Mr. Graham. I bet the kids do too.” He motioned for Carlo and began to walk away, leaving Will sprawled on the ground. “I’ll see you tomorrow when I come to play.”

Will slammed open the door, pausing to kick off his shoes at the appointed place before rushing into the kitchen. “I’m going to peel his fucking skin off with tweezers.”

Hannibal looked up from a sliced leek. “Why yes, Will, I did have a lovely day, thank you so much for asking.”

Will huffed, slumping into a stool by the kitchen island, the one Hannibal specifically bought since Will liked chatting with him as they cooked. Will kicked the island just to watch Hannibal’s eye twitch. “Hi honey, I’m home. How was your day dealing with the plights of the overly privileged in Baltimore?”

“Finish chopping this, please.” Hannibal vacated the chopping block and moved to turn on the range. Will sighed, grabbing the knife and falling into an easy rhythm as he glanced up to take in Hannibal sautéing mushrooms. The doctor turned, as he added vermouth to the pan, seemingly insensible of the flambé as he spoke to Will. “I think I may have convinced Mrs. Velmont to poison her husband.”

“In the pan or leave ‘em here?” Hannibal swung the flaming pan toward Will, he scraped the chopped leeks into it. “She the one married to the cheater who slaps her around when he drinks?”

“The same.” Hannibal jostled the contents of the pan, smiling to himself. “Start the risotto for me, this is almost ready.”

“Make sure she does it slow.” Will poured some arborio rice into a pan, stirring it as the grains heated.

“I will endeavor to.” Will felt Hannibal at his back, a solid fissure of energy that seemed to drive up from the base of his spine. When a warm hand coiled around his hip, nudging him from in front of the pan, Will relented, but stayed close enough to feel the heat radiating off of Hannibal. Without being asked, Will fetched the stock. “Now, what inspired these punitive feelings toward Mason?”

“Mason grabbed me, went right for my face, didn’t even blink. Squeezed until he thought I’d bruise.” Hannibal had stopped stirring the risotto, frowning into the middle distance. Will added some stock and fitted his hand around Hannibal’s encouraging him to move the spoon. “I need you to grab me later, make some marks.”

“Why?” Hannibal knew, Will could see from the spark in those dark bloody eyes. But Hannibal also loved hearing Will’s reasoning, watching as Will picked apart a pathology. He stepped forward, resting his chin on Hannibal’s shoulder as they stirred together.

“I think seeing bruises…knowing that I bruise easily, that he can mark me with so little effort, and that I’m afraid of him…” Will drawled out the sentence, an invitation.

“It will excite him beyond measure.” Hannibal finished, turning to whisper the words into Will’s cheek. Will kept his eyes ahead, one of them had to be sure not to burn the risotto. “He will likely grab you again just to see you wince at his dominance.”

“But when he grabs me, I want them to be your marks, not his.” Will tightened his grip on Hannibal’s hand.

Soft lips found the corners of his mouth. Will’s eyes fluttered closed. “My darling.”

“I don’t care what he thinks, what we need to do for show, but I need to know it was you. That you marked me, that you’re with me.”

Hannibal turned, fitting his hand to Will’s face. He let Will adjust his fingers until they fit into the footprints left by Mason. When they were positioned, Hannibal squeezed.

Will made no sound this time as the pain flared along his jaw and cheek, he only opened his eyes to watch as Hannibal crushed his flesh with a look of such blinding adoration it left Will breathless.

“Hello, Mr. Graham.” Will let his spine stiffen when he heard the lilting voice behind him. No emotion, no hint of humanity, just a singsong cadence as if Mason had learned to speak through nursery rhyme.

“H-hi.” Will kept his chin tucked, hiding his bruises in his scarf.

Mason caught the movement immediately and stepped closer. His gloved hand landed on little Michael’s head, shaking it hard in the guise of an affectionate ruffling of hair. “Aren’t you a cute little critter?”

Michael looked up, eyes already wide. Mason crouched down to mimic the boy’s gaping stare. He glanced up at Will. “Does this one talk?”

“Yes, he’s just shy.”

Mason furrowed his brow in mock chastisement. “Now, now, now, little piggy, we can’t be shy. Who will want you if you don’t play along?”

Michael made a desperate noise and stepped back only to have Mason clamp a hand on his shoulder. Will wanted to reach out, to break every bone in that evil wrist, but he couldn’t afford the misstep when he was so close to luring his prey. Michael pulled, his voice growing hysterical, which seemed to make Mason’s smile broaden.

“No need for all this, have a chocolate,” Mason produced a foil wrapped object and held it out. Will stepped forward, grabbing Michael and pulling him back.

“He’s allergic.” Will extended his chin so Mason could see the splotchy bruises on his pale face before turning to the oldest in his group. “Kwame, take the others and go back to the main building. Tell Ms. Rita to set you up with some crafts.”

The boy nodded solemnly, taking Michael’s hand as he ushered the rest back to the relative safety of the building. Mason stood, tilting his head as Will stepped back from him.

“You seem skittish, Will.” Mason edged closer just to gleefully watch Will edge away. “Don’t you like your job here?”

Will nodded, keeping his eyes down. He knew the hand was coming, but jolted anyway when Mason grabbed him, careful to dig his hands into the bruises. Will thought of Hannibal, of those burning eyes, of the soft kisses the doctor had placed on each purpling welt while they read by the fire. The ghost of those lips kept Will from striking out, from cracking Mason’s sternum and getting hauled away by guards. Instead, Will whimpered pitifully, feeding the monster before him.

“You seem nervous. Nervous in my service!” Mason released him to clap before grabbing Will’s arm, fingers digging in. “Come with me, Mr. Graham, let me show you where I go when I’m nervous.”

“The kids-” Will pulled weakly, encouraging Mason to sink his claws in tighter.

“It’s not that I don’t think you’re qualified, Will, but I think the kids can survive a little walk, don’t you?” Will acquiesced, bowing his head as Mason led him, his grip still too tight. They walked well off the main grounds, into the woods behind the estate. Will counted six security cameras along the path and angled into different sections of the woods. There would be no hiding along this trail.

The trail opened up to reveal a small building, the wood and brick weathered over the years. Will could hear Carlo’s steps on the leaves behind him, but if he needed to, he could probably take out both of them. Mason stepped forward, gesturing to the building with that same doll smile that conveyed nothing.

“This is where Verger Meat Processing got started. My great-great-great-grandfather had this built so he could slaughter his hogs himself. My family believes in the personal touch.” Mason pulled Will toward the building, typing in a sequence of numbers into a locking pad and swinging open a door.

The squeals were nearly deafening. A large metal box lay before Will in the open building, through the holes he could discern shapes moving, screaming, pressing into each other.

Mason clapped a hand on the back of Will’s neck, fingers yanking at the curls. “Now, these days Verger Industries goes through 86-thousand cattle a day and 36-thousand pigs – far too much for this facility. But Papa let me have this building to myself. He appreciates my sense of industry. Papa conducted my real education in slaughterhouses and I was an excellent student. Let me show you what I’ve been working on.”

Will was dragged up a flight of stairs to overlook the metal container. On the landing was an antique armchair and footstool, a few speakers, and an MP3 player. Mason led Will by the scruff to the end of the landing, where Will could see the metal container had walls and odd openings – a maze, he realized. Above the maze hung a large golden framed mirror, angled perfectly so that someone on the landing could see all the chaos below.

“As I’ve said, breeding has always been important to the Vergers. And I am looking to breed the perfect little piggy. I’ve started combining all the finest, toughest breeds I could, and while they are strong, the taste isn’t quite what I thought.” Mason hit a button and the MP3 player started, screams echoed throughout the hollow building, drowning out the squeals. The screams were shrill, small, childlike and Will let himself tremble so he wouldn’t do something stupid like try to kill Mason Verger in front of an armed guard. Mason laughed. “I play them music, I make them big and strong, and still they want more more more! A mother’s work is never done!”

“W-what do you want?” Will thought of every tremulous panic reaction he’d ever had – to Matthew, to his father, to Hannibal when he first appeared. He let himself fall into a mess and watched delight spread over Mason’s face.

“What do I want…what do I want, what do I want?” Mason cocked his head, that vacant doll smile tilting. He pulled the scarf from Will’s throat and tossed it to the pigs. They fell upon it instantly, the scrap of blue wool lost to the writhing flesh of the brown hogs. “I want to change their diet, sweeten them up, as it were. You’re awfully sweet, what do you eat, Mr. Graham?”

I’m going to feed you to these fucking things in pieces. Will said to himself. He thought of Hannibal of their promised date tonight, of warm kisses by a fire and making Hannibal laugh with ridiculous stories, he thought of anything to keep himself from doing something utterly rash. He would come home to Hannibal. He would always come home to Hannibal, even if it meant allowing this ball of hair gel and psychopathy to live another day.

When Will looked up he was crying. Mason’s eyes caught the tears and he seemed to fixate upon them. Reaching into his pocket, Mason removed a silver cigarette case. Opening it, Mason produced two small little squares of paper and pressed them to the fresh tears spilling from Will’s eyes. Once the tears saturated the paper, Mason carefully stored them back in the case and slipped it into his pocket.

“P-please, p-please l-let me go.”

“Let you go? But we were just getting to know each other!” Mason looked over the railing at his creatures. “I like you. The pigs like you. Carlo, you like Mr. Graham, don’t you?”

Carlo’s impassive face bobbed in what must have passed for a nod. The guard pulled a gun from his waist and let it rest on his thigh.

“Don’t mind him, Italians are excitable,” Mason waved off his guard and crouched in front of Will, who lay crumpled at his feet. “Let me be blunt, Mr. Graham. I don’t have many friends. You see, it’s not good for a boy like me to spend so long in solitude. It gets me thinking. Last night I was laying in my bed composing like the deaf Beethoven when I thought of your face. It’s a good face, Mr. Graham, I like it very much. I think it, and you, will do me some good. What do you say? Shall we be friends?”

Will shook all over, he could feel snot bubbling from his nose but chose not to wipe at it. “P-please-”

“Of course, if you don’t want to be friends, I could always play with those boys. Michael was it, the one that likes to squeal? I bet he’d love my little pets.”

“I-I’ll be your f-friend just please d-don’t-”

“Oh Mr. Graham, I think we’ll have plenty of good, funny times ahead of us. I have so much to show you.” Mason stood and offered Will a hand. Will took it, allowing himself to be dragged upwards. He made sure to weave, as if the stress had made his limbs loose. “Why don’t we have dinner next week? I can tell you all about my plans.”

Will nodded numbly, tears still spilling. Mason smiled and clapped his hands. “I can’t wait to tell you all the things we’re going to do together, Will! You should get back to the kids, you know the way don’t you?”

Mason and Carlo left Will to cry on the landing. Will had clocked at least two security cameras on his way in, so he kept up the charade of trembling sobs as he unsteadily sought the door. Dinner would be a perfect time to kill Mason Verger. He’d have to take out Carlo first, but if he had a knife that wouldn’t be a problem. The perimeter guards wouldn’t even be alerted if he did it right. Of course, this meant there wouldn’t be a way for Hannibal to come along, and Will had a feeling that would upset the doctor, but this was important. Mason was a dog that needed to be put down. Maybe if he had time he’d sneak upstairs and kill that evil fuck of an old man too. Probably be a favor to Margot.

Will put on a show of pulling himself back together. When Mason watched the tapes later, he’d see a broken boy sobbing by the door, after he cried himself out, Will made an exaggerated effort to smooth his hair and dry his tears before running through the forest and back to the kids. For the rest of the day, he kept the boys inside, playing I Spy, crafting and talking about why you should never accept candy from Mason Verger.

When Will went to leave, he noticed his coat had been moved. Touching it, Will could smell a faint floral scent – not Mason, then. Rifling through the pockets Will found a folded piece of paper. It only had one word in elegant sloping script:

Run.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Will fucks up, but Hannibal is the one shaken by it.

The Killer Makes a Mistake

Chapter Summary

Will fucks up, Margot is brave, and Hannibal gets nervous.
Mason is still the worst, in case you were wondering.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Louis Graves had been an utter clusterfuck, Will could admit that much.

Hannibal had been oddly stiff since Will announced he'd secured a date with Mason Verger. The doctor's jaw seemed permanently locked and he played with Mischa's blade, spinning it in his fingers when he thought Will wasn't watching. Will had tried to sooth whatever was wrong with Hannibal with kissing and cajoling, but Hannibal pulled back from intimacy.

He cancelled dates so they could practice sparring. Instead of discussing Dante over dinner or chatting about their days, Hannibal only wanted to rundown the Verger security system – in Italian or English. Will had become so worried about Hannibal's increasing tension he'd stopped trying to lure the doctor into bed, instead taking solace when he was able to still Hannibal's hands, threading them together with his and getting the man to relax as they sat before a fire in the study.

Will didn't know why Mason had captured Hannibal's interest so, but he was thrilled that he would be eliminating the source of his love's strife in a few days' time. In the meantime, Will thought a distraction was in order.

Since any and all dates would be postponed so Hannibal could go over strategies like a general, Will thought to appeal to Hannibal's baser instincts: a hunt. A chance for fresh blood and meat to calm the doctor's nerves and give Will a target for his pent-up agitation.

Will suggested they just go to a bar. With his empathy and Hannibal's watchful eye, they would surely find a target quickly.

Louis Graves had materialized by Will's side less than 45 minutes after Will sat at the bar. While the bartender had dubiously looked at Will's fake ID before handing him a beer, Louis Graves seemed to have no such worry about the young man beside him. He had slipped something into Will's drink almost immediately. There was no finesse, but Will was just looking for a quick bit of bloodshed to help Hannibal breathe again.

Good enough Will decided, turning to send a wink toward Hannibal at the end of the bar before swallowing a mouthful of the drugged beer. After a few minutes he knocked the

rest of his drink down Louis' pants and offered to pat him dry with crumpled fistfuls of bar napkins. He slurred an apology before letting his limbs get heavy.

Soon, Louis was escorting him out of the bar and slipping him into a car. In the side mirror, Will saw Hannibal slinking toward the parking lot. He smiled to himself as Louis drove him to the site where there would most definitely be a murder.

Louis Graves' apartment was sparse, barely a stick of furniture save for a stained mattress in the corner. It didn't matter, Will had seen worse, had lived in worse occasionally when the welfare checks didn't come. He slumped where Louis dropped him and waited for the man to turn his back before striking.

Will wasn't in a hurry. He hadn't gotten a kiss from Hannibal in days. That, plus the frustration of cowering whenever Verger neared him added up to a need for violence. He needed to feel his blood flowing, the thrill of bone snapping and flesh tearing. He wanted Hannibal to find him saturated in gore, a look that always seemed to inspire awe and lust in the doctor.

He'd only hit Louis five times when the garrote closed around his throat. Will hadn't even noticed the wire slipping around his neck and had no chance to block it from cutting into his air supply. He choked, lurching backwards into a large man's chest.

"I fucking told you, man, you gotta dose 'em more or fucking knock 'em out."

Will panicked for a moment, clawing at his throat before Hannibal's voice came to him. *Do not attack a weapon, attack what is holding the weapon. Pressure points, soft flesh – tear around them and you will achieve the weapon in time.*

Will shifted his hands, trying to press into the median nerves in his captor's hands but found them covered with thick leather. The garrote tightened, Will's vision wavered.

"FUCK, look at this motherfucker, he knows what he's doing. See, I told y-" Will hit the floor hard. He yanked at the wire around his throat and sucked in air, the dots in his vision starting to clear. Blood sprayed out over the room and the big man who had him fell to the floor.

Louis was on his knees, trying to back away. "I didn't wanna! He already hit me!"

Hannibal stepped over Will without looking at him. He grabbed Graves' head and yanked, a sickening *pop* ending the man's pleas. He didn't turn to Will. Didn't check the boy's throat for injury. Hannibal stood, facing the door, Will watched as his doctor's shoulders heaved, the rest of him oddly still.

"Clean your fingerprints from here, collect that wire, and meet me in the car." Hannibal left without looking at Will.

The ride home had been unbearable. Will had royally fucked up, and as a result, instead of earning a few blood-flecked kisses and a meal, he was now staring at Hannibal Lecter's clamped jaw, every tendon clearly defined and tense. The car filled with the sandalwood and

rosemary of Hannibal's cologne. But when Will tried to draw it into his lungs and calm himself, there was a sour note to the smell that caught on his tongue – something bitter and sharp that made his mouth salivate. It set his teeth on edge.

Will trailed Hannibal into the house. Morosely, he clomped up the stairs to his bedroom, shucking his clothes for the burn barrel in their back yard and showering. He let himself sag in the shower. He let the fear and adrenaline leach from his skin and turn the scent of the wet air sour. He sobbed, not for the life he almost lost, but for the bone-deep knowledge that he'd failed Hannibal, proven himself to be a stupid, simple child. What if Hannibal didn't want him after this? What if Hannibal replaced him?

Hannibal was sitting on Will's bed when he emerged from the bathroom, his med kit laid out by his side.

"I know I fucked up. I didn't check the apartment. I was too focused on the kill and I lost my situational awar-"

"Please sit, I need to inspect your injuries." Hannibal's voice was flat, it stung worse than Will's throat.

He sat silently on the bed, lifting his chin and letting Hannibal prod at the wound. "There will be bruising, but it should fade. Is there any other place you're feeling a-"

Will grabbed at Hannibal's hands, his eyes tearing. "I'll be better, you'll see with Mason. It'll be beautiful. I'll-"

"Mason Verger has a staff of 20, you couldn't handle two men, Will." Hannibal's voice had picked up emotion, unfortunately it seemed to be anger.

"I can handle two men!"

"Yes, if they wait their turn and announce their presence. Be sure to tell the Verger guards that when you go in for your grand hunt!"

Will blinked, snarling at himself when a tear fell. "I'm gonna bring you his fucking head. I'm gonna throw it on your ugly imported duvet and then you'll stop looking at me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like I'm a disappointment." The tears wouldn't stop now. He screwed his eyes shut, but they kept escaping. Hannibal pulled his hands from Will's grasp and the boy sobbed, utterly alone in the dark for the first time in nearly two years. He could hear the doctor packing his kit, setting it on the nightstand by Will.

He gasped when Hannibal's arms wrapped around him, easing Will to the bed and coiling over him like a blanket. Hannibal's weight was comforting and complete, Will felt his body relax beneath the pressure. A strong hand raked through his wet curls, soft lips ran

along Will's jaw, his lungs filled with the scent of sandalwood and rosemary. The bitter note in Hannibal's skin seemed to retreat the longer Will drew breath.

"I am immensely disappointed, Will," Hannibal whispered into the bruised flesh of the younger man's throat. "I am disappointed in myself. How I've pushed you. How I've allowed your impulses to govern mine. I should not have offered you Mason Verger's file yet. It was impulsive of me. I find myself inconveniently distracted by you at nearly every moment of the day. Your mind, beauty, spirit – they have corrupted my good sense."

"Hannibal, please I-"

"I'm not suggesting we amend our arrangement," Hannibal soothed, pulling Will tight to his chest and kissing the scar on his shoulder. "I could not be parted from you now. I'm merely suggesting a trip, a break from the stress I've placed upon you and the expectations you feel you need to meet. Anywhere in the world you wish to go. We will eat, talk, roam the museums or the beaches."

"Make love?" Will could feel his heart picking up, rabbiting when pressed against the steady beat of Hannibal's.

The doctor smiled, tilting his chin to press kisses on Will's cheeks. "Whatever you wish."

Will looked up, nosing at Hannibal's chin until the older man's mouth dropped to meet his own. They kissed languidly, like they had before the Verger stress seemed to consume them. When they broke apart, Will smiled. "Florence."

"Florence?"

"I want you to show me Florence. I want to sip coffee with you and speak Italian and make love as the Duomo chimes."

Hannibal blinked languidly, contented as a cat. His smile grew wide and toothy. "I know just the place to stay. I'll call in the morning."

"Stay with me tonight."

"Will-"

"I won't – I just want to hear your heart, feel your arms. I won't *try* anything." Will looked up, exhaustion already weighing on his features.

"I expect you to be a gentleman," Hannibal admonished, kicking off his shoes and bicycling his legs to get under the covers without releasing Will.

"I promise, I'll only grab your ass a few times, your dick is off limits." Hannibal huffed, tugging sharply at Will's hair. The younger man found he liked the sensation. His head grew heavy in Hannibal's arms, and he noted distantly that covers were being pulled around his shoulders.

“The light in Florence is nearly golden, you will be Apollo himself when bathed in it.” Hannibal murmured.

“I can’t wait for you to show me Italy.” Will yawned. “It’ll be the perfect reward for killing Mason.”

Will felt Hannibal go tense around him, but let sleep take him before he could hear the doctor’s next words.

“My brother says you’re having dinner with him.”

Will turned to see Margot, standing ramrod straight in the doorway of the crafts room, her gloved hands clasped tightly in front of her. At the edge of her stiff white color, Will could see the yellowing stain of a faded bruise.

“Y-yes I am,” Will ducked his head, looking at his fidgeting hands. “W-will you be j-joining us?”

Margot’s mouth thinned into a fine line she walked to the corner of the craft room, away from the kids, and glared at Will to follow. “Please do me the courtesy of dropping this little stuttering hick act. I assure you it doesn’t provoke the same excitement in me as it does my brother.”

Will’s brow furrowed for a moment, and his mind began to spin. Just what were Hannibal and Margot discussing in their sessions? “What do you want, Margot?”

“I don’t think you understand what you’re walking into.” Margot looked so drawn in the pale light, so very tired for such a young woman. “I think you should cancel, make up a stomach flu, something embarrassing that Mason can use to mock you. Do not come here Thursday.”

“I don’t think you understand-”

“I know the kind of man Dr. Lecter is, just like I know the kind of man my brother is.” Margot said with a frown.

Will’s lip curled, anger burning bright in his chest. “Hannibal is nothing like your brother.”

Margot’s eyes widened and she recoiled slightly. “I’m well aware that there are many types of creatures with teeth in this world, Will.”

She looked at him with narrowed eyes. “Some hide their fangs better than others.”

“Then you should know to avoid us all.”

“Difficult when one lives in their den.” Margot sighed. “I know the type of man Dr. Lecter is, and I can guess the type you are if he’s sent you here, but I don’t think you understand. My brother, he’s-”

Will scoffed, tired of being underestimated by every person who seemed to encounter him. “I’ve dealt with wolves before, Ms. Verger.”

“Not like this one,” Margot whispered. “Not like Mason.”

“I promise you I’ve-”

Margot grabbed his hand, pressing something into his palm. He looked down to see a golden foiled chocolate, the type Mason kept in his pockets. “Take a bite of that when you get home, maybe you’ll understand then.”

“Margot!” Mason stretched the word into two lilting syllables, a singsong taunt rather than a name. Margot froze, eyes widening as she looked helplessly at Will for a half breath, she glanced down at the chocolate. Will brought his hand slowly to his hoodie, careful to keep his movements small and undetectable as he pocketed the chocolate. “Just the girl I wanted to see. I hate to break up your little powwow but I need to chat with my sister. You’ll excuse us, won’t you, Mr. Graham? If Margot here is a good little girl, I’ll let her visit you Thursday, when you come to dinner.”

Margot’s eyes fell closed, moisture forming at the lash line. Taking a deep breath, she turned – chin high and defiant, shoulders back, and eyes utterly terrified. Will’s bit his cheek. In his mind he saw Bev, that same defiant angle to her chin, no matter the risk no matter the danger – a warrior spirit to the end. Will promised himself he’d kill every member of the Verger family until he was sure Margot could find peace. Perhaps then Bev would stop screaming his name at night when even thoughts of Hannibal wouldn’t drive out the sound of her voice.

Mason held his arm out as if he meant to slip it around his sister’s shoulders. When she was in range, however, he snapped his hand to her braid, twisting it around his fist like a handle and jerking her head back. Margot’s mouth opened slightly, but no cry came out. In that moment, Will loved her almost as much as he did Hannibal.

“You kids be good!” Mason called, dragging his sister out the door. He paused, looking over his shoulder at Will. “You be a good boy too, Mr. Graham.”

Will nodded, letting Mason see the tremor in his mouth. He walked back to his group and helped Kwame cut notches in the leather bracelet he was making. As he worked, Will began to amend his plan for Mason. Perhaps it would be better for Margot to be present, for her to see her monster slain and know he was dead.

Will tossed Hannibal the chocolate as he settled at the stool by the kitchen island. The doctor caught it one handed, never taking his eyes off the veal he was searing.

“Typically, when wooing, one procures a whole box, Will,” Hannibal said, carefully flipping both chops.

“It’s not from me, it’s from Margot.” Hannibal looked up at that, head tilted. “Some sort of warning, I think she wants me to back off Mason.”

“A sweet from Mason’s personal reserve,” Hannibal smiled. “A brave girl, to steal one for us.”

Will nodded, watching as Hannibal inspected the gold foil. Getting off the stool, Will moved to take over the veal so Hannibal could focus on the chocolate. After a few moments, Will checked the sauce and began plating. He wasn’t nearly as precise as Hannibal yet, but the doctor assured him his drizzling technique would refine in time.

“So, what’s in the chocolate?”

“My best guess would be a paralytic, I doubt Mason’s proclivities would allow for his victims to be unconscious.” Hannibal unwrapped the chocolate and snapped it in half, bringing the fracture to his nose. He frowned. “This is surprisingly low-grade chocolate.”

Will chuckled, nudging Hannibal affectionately with his hip. “Only you would be worried about the quality of the chocolate used to immobilize prey.”

“It’s rude,” Hannibal sneered. “Dismissive. Mr. Verger puts no effort into his proclivities. His pathology is distasteful but this indolence in technique is abhorrent.”

Will rolled his eyes. Leave it to Hannibal Lecter to judge a monster more harshly because he lacked style. He watched as the doctor popped half the chocolate into his mouth, letting it melt on his tongue. He swallowed before Will could protest. Hannibal’s eyes turned thoughtful, and Will longed to kiss each furrow in his brow to see if he could feel the wheels turning in that immense brain.

“Pancuronium,” Hannibal said, mouth forming a moue. “Used to paralyze laboratory animals during experiments and large animals for surgeries. Mr. Verger is working with a rather disreputable vet, I imagine.”

“So, after I take care of Mason, we should look at who takes care of his animals.”

“I believe so.” Hannibal’s jaw flexed. “He gives this to children?”

“He gives them to anyone.”

“It’s a rather large dose,” Hannibal wavered. Will was at his side in an instant, bracing the larger man. “Dangerous to give so much to a – Will, could you help me to the study? I’m afraid you’ll have to dine alone tonight.”

“You idiot, why did you swallow the damn thing?” Will huffed as he helped Hannibal toward the door. He was practically dragging the doctor by the time they reached the foyer.

“I was curious as to the dosage,” Hannibal’s accent had thickened and Will realized with a jolt that his muscles were ceasing to function. “Don’t panic, lay me down and make sure my airways are clear. It will go through my system in an hour or so.”

Will grumbled, heaving Hannibal’s body onto his back and pulling the limp form the rest of the way to the study.

A few hours later, Will sat on the floor by the sofa where he had settled Hannibal. The man’s breathing was even, rustling the hair by his ear with every exhale. He smiled when clumsy fingers tugged at his curls. “An hour my ass, you’ve been out for three.”

Hannibal hummed, tugging harder on the curls between his fingers. “Have you eaten?”

Will nodded, leaning back into the hand. “Had a poptart.”

Hannibal made a noise of displeasure. “I made a beautiful veal.”

“I wrapped it and put it in the fridge,” Will turned, smiling when the hand in his hair traced to his cheek. “It’s no fun eating all those high falutin’ foods without you.”

“A piece of chemically processed pastry is not a suitable dinner, Will.”

“You should talk,” Will snorted. “You had a fucking drugged chocolate.”

“Insolent child.” Hannibal struggled on stiff limbs to right himself. Will moved to help him. Hannibal ended up slumped against Will’s chest. The younger man took the opportunity to wrap his arms around his doctor “Did Margot tell you we had a session today?”

Will shook his head. Hannibal craned to look at Will in the eye, Will smiled and bopped him on the nose just to watch the doctor’s lip curl at the indignity.

“She told me there’s a man staying at the house, Mason has been bragging about his special skills.” Hannibal’s mouth ticked. “She also told me that there have been six more guards added to the roster, and Mason's had workmen in his private barn, the one he showed you, I believe. Margot is quite worried Mason is planning something.”

Will shrugged. “So are we.”

Hannibal struggled to sit up more fully, Will helped him struggle up. “You are not taking Mason Verger seriously.”

“You are turning into a mother hen!” Will shook his head, then cocked it. “Is this because you love me?”

Hannibal closed his eyes and sighed as if he were bearing the most unending of punishments known to man. “It is because I’ve spent two years on your training and I’d hate to have to find someone new and begin again just because you were too arrogant to-”

Will smiled, leaning in. “Just say you love me.”

“You are obnoxious and foolhardy.”

“But you’ll miss me when I’m gone.” Hannibal’s eyes flashed at that, something that looked so close to fear it made Will pause, the rest of his taunts dying on his lips. Will watched Hannibal’s face carefully, pulling every ounce of emotion he could from the man’s closed off expression. It was worse than fear, it was doubt. “You don’t think I can do it.”

“Not if you continue like this, no.” Will stood. Hannibal caught himself awkwardly on the couch and Will fought the urge to steady him. “You are too cavalier, you show no caution. If the guard numbers have increased as Margot has said, it could take me too long to get to you. I could-”

“You son of a bitch, you sent her to me, didn’t you? Told her to get a fucking chocolate to scare me.” Will threw his hands in the air. “Do you have any idea what Mason’s probably done to her?”

“I have a better idea than you, I assure you,” Hannibal’s voice was cold. His eyes sharp. “I wouldn’t have had to make such a distasteful choice if you displayed even an ounce of understanding as to the seriousness of the situation. This childish bravado-”

“She miscounted,” Will leaned into Hannibal’s face, hissing his words. “Mason didn’t add six guards, he added nine. Their rotations have been increased too. The gaps in the guard changes are five minutes now, not ten. The guy in the house is named Cordell, he’s got a medical background and I’m guessing he’s there to make sure that I stay alive for as long as possible. The engineer installed a hook, a big one, probably meant for lifting me or Margot over the pigs. It has a kill switch on the remote and by the door. I’ve also shorted out the remote, but I suppose it doesn't matter since I'm so cavalier.”

“I’m glad you paid attention but you failed to share this information with me which means our plans are obsolete and-”

“I didn’t share it because I can’t fucking take your babying.” Will snarled. “I can do this without training wheels. I’m ready.”

“Yes, just as you were ready for Mr. Graves.”

“Fuck you, you smug bastard,” Will could feel the doubt leaching from Hannibal to himself. Feel Hannibal’s worry and disappointment. He could feel the prickling in the back of his throat, the warning that he would cry if he stayed here to hear anymore of Hannibal’s chiding. He did the only thing he could do – he fled.

“You’re hardly proving yourself by storming out of here like a child when you know I can’t follow you.”

“It’s not childish, Hannibal, it’s pressing an advantage without mercy,” Will spat, keeping his back to the doctor. “You taught me that.”

Will stormed up the stairs and slammed his room door loud enough to be sure it would set Hannibal's teeth on edge. That, he could admit to himself, was childish, but it felt so good he was tempted to do it again. Instead, Will sat on his bed and pulled the Verger file from his nightstand, making notes on security upgrades.

Will sulked manfully for the next two days, silently appearing at dinners and skipping training session. He could feel Hannibal's eyes on him whenever he was in the house, but he refused to acknowledge him, no matter how badly he wanted to. He found the silence nearly unbearable, but hoped it would teach Hannibal a lesson.

On the third day, Will sat at dinner, silent as ever, eating his braised short ribs with his chin high. Unfortunately, it was a bit too high, and Will utterly missed his mouth when trying to fork a piece of tender meat inside. The chunk of short rib smacked Will dead in his upturned chin, sliding off the fork and rolling down his neck. It landed with a saucy splat on his hand before flopping onto Hannibal's damask tablecloth.

Will closed his eyes, flames licking up his cheeks. A strange wheezing sound caught Will's attention, drawing him out of his mortification temporarily. He slit an eye open to look to Hannibal, who was shaking with laughter so forceful it seemed he could barely breathe. His mouth gaped wide, bearing his fangs, and small laugh lines crinkled around the corners of his eyes, directing the flow of a few tears. Hannibal gasped, still seemingly paralyzed with mirth, shaking harder than before.

"Oh, go fuck yourself," Will grumbled, laughing in spite of his blush. He grabbed the piece of meat by his hand and chucked it at Hannibal, fully expecting the annoying bastard to catch it between his perfectly crooked teeth. But Hannibal was too busy laughing, and the airborne short rib landed squarely between his eyes. This only seemed to make Hannibal laugh harder, and Will, unable to resist the noise or how beautiful Hannibal looked when his impassive mask was shattered, dove for him across the table.

Will hadn't had a plan when he launched himself, and soon the men found themselves in a heap, uncontrollably laughing and pushing gently at each other. When Hannibal finally found his composure, he wiped a trail of gravy from Will chin. "How did I ever eat a meal without you?"

"Quietly, probably."

"That is true." Hannibal's hand cupped the base of Will's skull like it had been formed solely to cradle it. "It was terrible."

Will smiled, pushing forward and kissing Hannibal with gravy coated lips. "I'm still pissed."

"I still have concerns."

"I miss talking to you," Will whispered in Italian.

“And I you.” Hannibal leaned up, kissing Will again. “I would give more than an antique tablecloth for your company.”

Will rolled, letting his head fall on Hannibal’s shoulder. There was a wineglass above their heads, teetering. “Don’t worry, we won’t have anything to fight about after tomorrow.”

“I’m sure we’ll find something.”

“Probably,” Will snorted, gesturing between them, “but once I go to see Mason, this’ll be over.”

Will could feel the weight of Hannibal’s stare, something heavy in his chest kept him from looking at the doctor. “I believe that possibility is why we’re quarreling.”

Will sighed. “Can we just call a truce? Or do I have to knock the wine on myself too?”

Hannibal pulled Will to him, but something felt wrong. Hannibal’s grip too tight, his heartbeat just a bit faster than the normal *thump thump thump* that usually mollified Will’s nerves. Something acrid and bitter was mixing with Hannibal’s sandalwood and rosemary cologne. Closing his eyes, Will could see Mason Verger’s doll-faced smile. He promised himself he’d crack the expression off of Verger’s skull and win back the soothing rhythm of Hannibal’s heart.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Everyone gets exactly what they want...for like 12 hours.

The Killer Gets Distracted

Chapter Summary

Everything goes really well for 12 hours...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will mentally reviewed his plan for what must have been the 50th time as he shampooed his hair. Hannibal had backed off a bit, but he could feel the tension swirling around the doctor, could see it in the tightness around his eyes and lips. Hannibal had mentioned Florence several times, and Will had kissed him quiet, murmuring between clinches in Italian about the dishes he wanted Hannibal to make from Mason's body. He'd noticed too that he could smell the vague scent of sandalwood in his room after a run, though all of his notes on the Verger security and the estate were exactly as he left them when he checked.

The only clue that Hannibal had meticulously gone over his plans was the reordering of the security schematics. The blueprint for the Mason's barn had been left on top of the stack, the locking apparatus on the outer doors first on the pile, an odd crease in the bottom half of the paper. That wasn't how he'd left them, and when he smoothed the crinkle he noticed that it highlighted a weakness in the wiring, one that could easily dismantle the bolting mechanism. Will smiled at Hannibal's silent suggestion and made a new note in his book. He wanted to thank Hannibal, wanted to perhaps go over the rest of the plan, but he was afraid of another fight, of smelling that acrid scent under Hannibal's cologne, the one that made Will feel like a disappointment.

Will shook his head, rinsing the suds and his worries about Hannibal from him. He needed to focus. He would face Mason in a few hours and he needed to be ready.

"I'll have to do it before he serves any food," Will muttered to his reflection as he toweled off his head. Will had no tolerance for pancuronium, he couldn't risk exposure.

"Why? Will he be serving Spaghetti Os?"

Will froze, turning to see Hannibal leaning against the bathroom door, smiling. Hannibal was in a pair of black slacks, a crisp white oxford opened at his throat and rolled up his powerful arms. The doctor's eyes swept along Will's body and the boy became painfully aware that he was in nothing but a towel. He'd jerked off to exactly this scenario so many times that Will wondered hysterically if he might be dreaming.

“What are you doing?” Will tossed his hair back, sending wet droplets across the bathroom to land on Hannibal’s hand. The doctor moved closer to Will, grabbing the knot of the towel to reel the younger man closer.

“It occurred to me I should give you a kiss for luck,” Hannibal said, running his lips along Will’s dewy jaw. Will blinked, eyes focusing on Hannibal’s wet lips, so very very close to his own. “May I?”

Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s neck without a thought to what his wet body would do to Hannibal’s pristine clothes. Their lips slid together, mouths fitted on a moan. Will leaned into Hannibal, content to let the doctor nip and suck at his lower lip. Hannibal moved lower, carefully kissing the purple line the garotte left before moving to suck at the join of Will’s shoulder. Will whined, hands tangling in Hannibal’s hair to keep him where he was. “Ha-Hannibal, how much luck do you think I need?”

“That is not the question you should be asking,” Hannibal murmured into his neck before biting at the skin beneath his lips. Will’s body ran hot and cold all over, he couldn’t control his trembling. “You should be asking how much luck I’m willing to give you.”

Will felt drunk. His head was thick with the scents of sandalwood and rosemary, but there was something in the back of his mind. Something important…

Hannibal backed Will into his sink, pressing their hips together. Will moaned. “I’m going to be late.”

“When must you leave?” Hannibal was just under Will’s ear, teeth teasing at his lobe.

“By *sssix*,” Will hissed as Hannibal’s thigh slotted between Will’s legs and pushed.

“We have plenty of time, then.” That acrid smell was back, just below the sandalwood and rosemary.

Will wanted to ask why now, why when he had something he needed to be doing. Will wanted to ask what had finally broken Hannibal’s will. Will wanted to answer the questions himself, as something in the back of his brain screamed at him to stop, to think, that something wasn’t quite right.

But Will wanted Hannibal more.

“Plenty of time,” Will agreed, letting Hannibal pull the towel from his hips.

Hannibal pressed Will against the sink, his hands kneading at Will’s back as he reclaimed the younger man’s mouth. Will sank his hands into Hannibal’s hair, ruffling the gelled locks as he grappled for purchase. He could feel himself being lifted, but took no mind, focused only on wrapping himself so thoroughly around Hannibal he could never be extricated.

When they reached Will’s bed, Hannibal patted Will’s ass, laughing when Will made a noise of protest and tightened his grip. “Are we to stay like this all evening? Or may I set you

down?"

"What happens after you set me down?" Will felt his heart flutter, panic giving him an image of Hannibal leaving the room, never returning. Hannibal kissed just under Will's ear, then nipped the skin. Firmly, he sat Will on the edge of the edge of the bed. Will loosened his grip, allowing Hannibal to spread him along the mattress. He tried not to blush when Hannibal stepped back, eyes sweeping over him, afraid it would seem childish or immature to the older man. But Hannibal merely sighed in awe, smiling softly as he let his hand trail the dips and curves of Will's body once before stepping away.

"What happens next…" Hannibal mused, hands moving to the buttons at his throat. "First, I remove my clothing."

The steady hands methodically undid each button on the now wrinkled shirt. Will licked his lips, watching those strong fingers nimbly moving down the fabric. Each new button deepened the v of flesh Will could see. He'd seen Hannibal shirtless before, he'd dreamed of that dark bramble of chest hair and the soft patch of flesh that covered the strong muscular stomach, but this was different. This was the first time that Hannibal's chest, the heaving power behind it, was just for Will, bared just to give him pleasure.

Hannibal pulled the fabric off his shoulders, his muscles flexing as he let the material drop to the floor. He cocked his head when his fingers reached his belt, unbuckling it.

"Then, I'm of two minds," Hannibal said, pulling the belt from his loops and running the strip of leather through his hands. "I am tempted to make good use of my belt, revisit a lesson on restraints, or-"

"Yes, yes," Will squirmed to sit up, reaching for Hannibal and the belt.

Hannibal laughed, his large hand catching Will in the chest and firmly pressing him back to the bed.

"Hmmmm," Hannibal ran his nails along Will's chest, catching a pert nipple and making Will choke on air. "I think perhaps we should have a lesson on patience, instead."

"Hannibal, I swear to god, if you-"

Hannibal was in his face in a flash, hands pressing Will's arms above his head. "YOU will be a good boy and listen and learn, won't you Will?"

Will panted, lifting his head to capture Hannibal's lips. The doctor stayed just out of range. Hannibal watched Will struggle, his eyes dancing. Will thought of those bloody eyes, and how they seemed to dance at Will's defiance. Will struggled harder, forcing Hannibal to put effort into his holds. Only then did Will acquiesce, letting the tension drain from his body. He looked up, eyes wide as he wet his lips. "Sorry, I'll be a good boy."

Hannibal made a noise deep in his throat, claiming Will's mouth with a near desperate kiss. Will smirked into the doctor's mouth, sucking on the older man's tongue. He yelped when he felt the strong fingers tug his nipple.

“Manipulative…I’m not sure I should reward that.” Hannibal eased off Will, smiling when the boy tried to cling to him. “Lay back down.”

Will took a deep breath. He lay back down, his chest heaving and his cock bobbing as he watched Hannibal. The doctor stood tall at the side of the bed, his eyes never leaving Will as he thumbed open the button of his slacks and let them slip from his hips.

“Far too many people rush when they have such beauty before them. It is a folly not to savor every inch,” Hannibal’s voice was the same tenor he’d used over the years to lecture Will, that authoritative even tone that demanded attention. Will could feel chills running down his body though his skin was flush. “There will not be a spot on your body I do not know.”

Slipping his thumbs into his boxers, Hannibal tugged them down. Will watched, rapt as the man before him rose again to his full height. Hannibal smiled down at Will, lifting his strong jaw slightly – an invitation to look his fill. Will rose to his elbows, drinking in every angle he could. Hannibal’s clothes had always belied his strength. Layers of stiff fabrics gave him a softer, domesticated body that fooled Baltimore society and patients alike. But beneath those expensive prints lay a powerful chest, broad and heaving, capable of picking up Will or beating an assailant into a daze. The muscles were coated in a bramble of dark chest hair that thinned as it trailed down his stomach. The doctor’s core was strong, Will had watched as the man jackknifed his body to break holds and climb trees, but good food and wine had left a layer of soft flesh over his abs. Will would knead at that expanse like a cat whenever Hannibal soothed him through sleepless nights and the sight of it now made Will’s heart beat wildly.

Flicking his eyes down, Will finally saw the man’s cock, half hard and arcing over his left thigh. Uncut, thick and beginning to grow ruddy as blood filled it, Will longed to move forward, grip it in his hands, make Hannibal tremble and keen. He knew, somewhere deep inside him that no one else would ever touch this man again, no one else would ever see him this bare. He’d kill any who dared. “I’ve never seen anything as beautiful as you.”

The doctor’s mouth quirked, he reached out to stroke Will’s calf. “I shall endeavor to acquaint you with a mirror.”

Hannibal kneeled at the end of the bed, taking Will’s right foot in his hand and kissing the arch. It tickled and Will jerked slightly, only to feel strong fingers wrap around his ankle and hold him still. Hannibal pulled Will down the soft sheets, the younger man’s heels resting on his back. He turned to suck a small mark behind Will’s left knee, the same spot Will knew, when pressed, would collapse the joint. Will keened, digging his hands into his hair.

“It is essential to know every weakness, every freckle and scar. I will mark every inch of you as mine.” Hannibal’s mouth lapped at the skin of Will’s inner thigh. Will made a low noise, his hips rolling. Strong hands gripped Will’s hips, pressing him down as Hannibal rose over Will’s groin. “And after that, what will you do?”

Will reached forward with shaking hands, threading his fingers into the loose strands of Hannibal’s hair, gripping tight. He pulled, forcing Hannibal to crawl up his body until the doctor’s mouth was a breath from his own. Will wrapped a leg around Hannibal’s hip as he

twisted his fingers, pulling Hannibal's head back. Will licked Hannibal's throat, catching a swallow on his tongue as he lapped. Pulling back, he met Hannibal's bloody eyes with shinning blue ones. "When you're done, I'll hold you down and do the same to you."

Hannibal smiled, his fangs glinting in the low light and little laughter lines creasing his eyes. A strong hand fitted itself to Will's cheek, thumb stroking. "Yes, you shall, my beautiful, remarkable Will."

The next kiss was languid, Hannibal pressing his hips into Will's as he sucked on the boy's lip at his leisure. Will's breath came in fits and stutters as he was devoured by the man above him. He felt light, like his body was filling with electric energy, tingling and pulsing. The only thing keeping him from bursting seemed to be Hannibal's sure hands, stroking his cheeks with strong thumbs as he took the rest of Will apart.

When Will was sure he'd incurred brain damage from oxygen deprivation, Hannibal moved away. Will immediately whined and tried to pull the doctor back to him, but was firmly pressed down to the mattress again.

"Wait your turn, please." Hannibal managed to look stern, even as he brushed his chin over Will's nipple. He caught the tip in his teeth and tugged gently, pulling an ungodly noise from deep in his gut. Hannibal ran soothing hands along Will's stomach quieting the younger man's tremors as he pressed chaste kisses onto his chest.

Will thought of the few odd fumbles he'd had in the backs of cars before he came to this place. Hands shoved up skirts, dry hands squeezing too hard and yanking too fast on his dick. He'd thought at the time it was good. He thought at the time he'd been happy. Now he looked at this man with his strong shoulders and pouting mouth that seemed content to press tender kisses on every cell in his body, and wondered how he could have been satisfied with anything less than this.

He knew there were tears in his eyes when he reached for Hannibal's hair and stroked. Blood stained eyes flicked to his and Will was overwhelmed with the devotion he saw in their depths. He was loved, fully and truly for the first time in his life. It didn't matter if Hannibal said it. It didn't matter if the words ever twisted their way from those beautiful wet lips. Will could feel it, could scent it in the air – sandalwood and rosemary.

"My Will," Hannibal whispered, reaching up to trace his pounding pulse with a soft finger. "I would give you anything you want, beautiful boy. All you need do is ask."

Will smiled, an idea niggling in the back of his head. An impulse, a fantasy that had kept Will up as many nights. "I want you to finish the fucking lesson."

Hannibal bit at the flesh just below Will's pecs, sharp and hard enough to leave a red ring. Will wanted to trace the ring with his fingers, he wanted them linked in chains all over his body. Strong hands manhandled Will onto his stomach and Will had only enough time to register what was about to happen when the slap landed across his ass.

"Insolent." Another slap as Hannibal fitted himself between Will's legs. Will could only moan, pressing his hips into the bed as Hannibal smacked him again. Then the mattress

shifted and familiar crooked teeth sank into the globe of his ass. “Will you be good?”

“No,” Will hissed, pressing himself into Hannibal’s bite. “*Fuck*, no.”

“Well if you won’t be polite, I suppose my only recourse is to keep you nonverbal.”

“Wha-” Firm hands parted Will’s cheeks and licked a long strip from the base of his balls to the small of his back. Will made a high pitched choking noise. “Ha-Hannibal?”

“If you’re uncomfortable-”

“*God* no.”

Will could feel Hannibal laugh, the heaving of his chest moving up Will’s spine, the light expulsion of air against his exposed body. It should have been filthy, or at least embarrassing, but Will found it only made him want more.

Another breath puffed over his hole a second before Hannibal’s tongue descended. Wet heat teased at Will’s rim, rolling and softly probing at the clenched muscle. Hannibal’s hands kneaded at the globes of his ass, his thumb stroking low and pressing at his perineum.

Will rubbed his forehead back and forth over his pillow, anything to keep him grounded as blinding sensation seemed to snake its way from the base of his spine in slow electric tendrils. This couldn’t be the way sex felt all the time. How could anyone possibly do anything else if they knew this was waiting for them?

He knew he was making ungodly noises, he could feel them in his throat and stretching his body, but he couldn’t hear them. His whole world was centered around Hannibal and his tongue, nothing else mattered. He thought of doing this to Hannibal, what sounds he would make. A fresh pulse of lust rippled up his spine, he wanted to take Hannibal apart, rebuild him so that he could do it again and again.

Will had just begun rolling his hips into Hannibal’s mouth when the doctor tilted slightly and slipped his tongue inside Will. The boy’s brain went static. He couldn’t seem to keep his hands from clawing at the sheets, or stop the keening noises that spilled from him. He wasn’t sure if there were words to be found in the noise, but it sounded like *more*.

He could feel his balls drawing up, his orgasm was seconds away. He arched his back, pressing further into Hannibal’s tongue – *so close*.

Hannibal pulled back, his hand gently rubbing at the small of his back. “How beautiful you sound, Will.”

“N-no. You fucking bastard, you, I,” Will reached an uncoordinated limb behind him, snatching for Hannibal’s head trying to drag him back.

“I’m not sure you’ve learned much about patience at all, Will.” Hannibal tilted his head, mouth glistening as he smiled at Will. “Roll over and let’s see what we can do about that.”

Hannibal stepped off the bed, bending to retrieve his trousers and digging in a pocket. Will did as he was told, reaching his hand out to Hannibal when he returned to the bed. Hannibal took his hand, letting Will pull him to lay beside the boy. “Please, don’t.”

Hannibal’s high brow furrowed. “Don’t what?”

“Don’t play with me – n-not this time.” Will ducked his head, his fingers tapping lightly on Hannibal’s chest. “I-it means too much.”

Will heard a stuttered breath and felt Hannibal touch his chin, lifting the boy’s gaze. “I take my time because of that.”

Hannibal kissed Will again, tenderly. Will heard the sound of a cap flicking open and braced himself for some sort of intrusion. Hannibal kept kissing him, sweet chaste little presses and sucks that drew soft moans from Will. He could feel Hannibal’s hand tracing down his body, traversing over the ridges in his stomach and wrapping around the base of his straining cock and pumping once, twice…

“Stop,” Will hissed, grabbing at Hannibal’s wrist and pushing him off, lower. Will’s chest was heaving, his body shivering though his skin prickled with heat.

“Shhhhh,” Hannibal soothed, kissing the soft spot below Will’s right ear. Slick fingers found their way between Will’s cheeks, stroking softly over his entrance. “Just breathe for me, Will. Like I taught you.”

Will filled his lungs, he felt like he was going to burst. Hannibal leaned on his left elbow, giving himself enough leeway to stroke Will’s neck and chest as his right hand sought entrance into Will’s body. After a few teasing strokes, Will’s breathing had smoothed, his heart less frantic as he stole kisses from the man angled above him. It was on one of these kisses that Hannibal pushed in, one finger rubbing as it fucked in and out of him.

“Do you know how beautiful you are?” Hannibal whispered, adding more lubricant and another finger. He smiled as Will gasped and pushed into the stretch. “Do you know how long I’ve dreamed of having you like this, pink and pliant beneath my hands?”

Will couldn’t respond, only keen and roll his hips into the doctor’s intrusion. His right hand clawed at Hannibal’s back, frantically trying to pull the doctor closer, there was still too much room left between them. His left hand twisted helplessly in the sheets, his grip spasming as each new sensation flowed through him.

“And for all my dreams, for all my helpless fantasies that plagued my every hour,” Hannibal’s lips caught the shell of Will’s ear. Hannibal twisted his fingers, rubbing firmly at Will’s prostate. The boy arched off the bed, shouting as he came in long streaks along his stomach. When Will collapsed back to the bed, Hannibal’s lips were back at his ear. “I could have never predicted you, predicted this. What a marvel you are, Will Graham.”

Will lay utterly insensible on the bed. Hannibal’s fingers were still gently moving inside him, but mercifully had moved from his prostate. He felt like a livewire, everything

touching him sent his skin sparking and he wasn't sure he could bear the sensations anymore. He wasn't sure he could bear it if they stopped either.

"We can end the lesson here," Hannibal offered, sliding down Will's body to lick at the come cooling on his flesh. "I will be happy to hold you in my arms and resume our studies in the-"

Will's snatched a hand into Hannibal's hair, yanking the doctor head from his stomach and forcing eye contact. "Our lesson isn't over yet."

"You're already oversensitive, darling."

Will's hand twisted. He wouldn't be denied, not because Hannibal had once again made all the decisions for him. "Finish the lesson, Dr. Lecter."

Hannibal smiled, sharp teeth exposed.

"Remarkable boy," Hannibal allowed himself to be dragged up Will's body for another kiss as he added a third finger. "Whatever shall I do with you?"

"S-shouldn't they have covered that in medical school?" Will gritted. The sensation was intense, as Hannibal had promised, but Will could feel his limbs relaxing again. The sharp feelings overwhelming him subsiding into a pleasant buzz. Hannibal kept kissing him, content to wait until Will began rolling his hips again, seeking friction.

"Are you ready, for your lesson, beautiful boy?"

Will moaned, his cock twitching and starting to fill again. Hannibal glanced down, before smiling softly and peppering Will's jaw with kisses. "Finally, an appropriate outlet for all your youthful exuberance."

Slipping from Will's hold, Hannibal moved to kneel between Will's legs. Slicking his cock, Hannibal gripped Will's hips, bringing the younger man onto his lap. The head of Hannibal's cock pressed at Will's hole and the only thought that seemed present in Will's head was *finally.*

When Hannibal pressed inside, Will cried out at the stretch. His whole body seemed to be warring with begging Hannibal to stop and begging him to stay inside him forever. Strong hands flexed around Will's hips, fingers stroking and soothing as Hannibal stilled.

Will looked up at his doctor, who's hands were beginning to tremble as they held Will's hips still. His hair was a wild mess hanging over his hooded eyes, Hannibal's mouth was open, panting as he watched Will. He looked feral, like a wild creature capable of tearing Will to pieces in a breath. And yet, Will had never felt safer in his life. This was Hannibal, his Hannibal, and they would both burn the world to ashes before they ever let each other go.

"Move," Will urged, his voice breathless. He raised a hand to Hannibal's face, thumb catching on Hannibal's sharp teeth as he traced the doctor's mouth. "Move, love, it's time."

Hannibal made a rumbling noise before rolling his hips. Will tightened his leg's around Hannibal's waist. His own cock was full again and Will began to rock in earnest as Hannibal found his rhythm.

As if reading Will's mind, Hannibal wrapped his still slick hand around Will's cock, letting Will fuck himself between Hannibal's thrusts and fists.

"Beautiful boy," Hannibal whispered, his fingers tightening as his thrusts grew rougher. "My Will."

"Yours," Will agreed, utterly lost to this feeling, to the impossible heat that seemed to radiate off his skin.

Hannibal's hands, moved, abandoning Will's cock and hip as they dipped behind his back. Will knew he was being lifted, but the shifting angle grazed his prostate, driving any and all questions from his mind. Hannibal brought him into a sitting position, fucking into Will's arching body as the younger man clung to his shoulders. Their mouths panted wet air into the scant inches between them, but neither thought to kiss. Instead they looked into each other's eyes, drinking in the other's pleasure as the thrusts turned into a slow grind.

Rubbing his cock against Hannibal's stomach as he rode him, Will let his head fall back. He was close again, his whole body seemed to be stretching too tight, about to snap. Hannibal dug a hand into Will's curls, tilting the boy back to his mouth.

"My Will," he panted, eyes nearly black in their intensity.

Will could only nod, filling his lungs with the scents of sex, sandalwood, and rosemary. He came with Hannibal filling every sense he had. Hannibal held him through his spasms, whispering in Italian little endearments about his beauty.

The doctor's hips started to stutter and his fingers dug in to Will's head and back. Will pressed into them, greedy for as many marks as Hannibal would bestow upon him. Hannibal came nearly silently, his breath hitching as he burrowed into the crook of Will's neck, teeth worrying at the soft skin he found. Will stroked Hannibal's hair as the doctor trembled, cooing his own words of love.

Will slumped forward onto Hannibal's chest. He couldn't possibly be expected to remain upright. Hannibal seemed to have a similar thought and they both fell backwards to the foot of the bed, a mess of cooling come, heated flesh, and tangled limbs.

"I'm so fucking mad at you," Will panted slapping lazily at Hannibal's chest.

The doctor froze, and Will frowned when he could see genuine worry crossing the man's brow. Will smiled, poking him again. "I can't believe you made me wait. Do you know how many times we could have done that since I moved in?"

Hannibal's brow smoothed, whatever trouble flickering behind his eyes gone for the moment. Instead, he smiled, gathering Will to his chest so he could nose at the sweaty curls

that had fallen into Will's face. "Do you know why we waited? Why I wanted you to know your mind before we did this?"

"You don't care about murder, but statutory rape would be rude?" Will grinned when Hannibal immediately frowned at his words. He kissed Hannibal, soft and beseeching. "Why?"

"Because I knew the moment you kissed me that if I allowed this – allowed myself to hope, I would be lost." Hannibal let his fingers trace through the tangle of curls on Will's head. "I wanted to give you the chance, if this was just a whim, to get away from me."

"Wow, you worked on that speech awhile, didn't you?" Will smiled, fingers digging into Hannibal's chest hair and tugging it. "I wasn't sold on you when I first got here. Took me about a month, I guess. I just thought you were weird until I saw you take off your shirt."

"Insolent brat," Hannibal snarled, rolling on top of Will and digging his hands into the boy's sensitive sides until they were both breathless with laughter.

Will stirred when he felt the bed shift. He could see the bleary image of Hannibal sitting up, face glowing in a blue white light.

"Hannibal?" Will squinted. A phone, Hannibal had a phone in his hands.

The doctor turned, smiling. He sat the phone in the drawer of Will's nightstand and closed it. Will frowned. Why had Hannibal…?

"You slept soundly," Hannibal was back in bed, his skin chilly against Will's sleep-warmed flesh. The boy shivered, smiling when Hannibal pulled him closer. "Would you like something to eat?"

Will shook his head, shoving harshly until he had Hannibal prone beneath him. "I want to try out what I learned."

Hannibal grinned, his sharp teeth catching in the light as Will began to turn him over.

Will woke to the sound of light snoring, Hannibal's morning breath blowing the curls back and forth along Will's forehead. The younger man bit his lips, a laugh bubbling in his chest. Suave, perfectly put together Hannibal Lecter was apparently a disaster before he woke up.

He looked electrocuted. Wild hanks of hair stood up and odd angles, creating a sort of crest that started at the crown of his head and tangled impressively over his eyes. His chin was dark with a day's worth of stubble, some hair around his chin already shining grey in the early morning light. Will inched forward softly to run his nose along it, he wondered what

Hannibal would look like with a beard. Though Hannibal's face was peaceful in sleep, his features lax and boyish, Will could already see the fine lines staking their claim around Hannibal's eyes. Will could picture the man Hannibal would age into – steely hair and laugh lines softening his severe features. He couldn't wait to meet that man, to drag him into bed as many times as he would the one before him now.

Hannibal snuffled and a puff of stale air hit Will.

"I must be in love with you," Will muttered, biting lightly at Hannibal's chin just to watch him stir. The doctor's first conscious act was to tighten his grip on Will, dragging him closer and pressing closed-eyed kisses along Will's face and curls. The boy thought his heart might explode.

Finally, Hannibal slit an eye open, the corner of his mouth quirking up as he focused on Will.

"How beautiful you are in the morning light," Hannibal murmured, tracing a finger over Will's smile. "Bed rumpled and utterly mine to do with as I please – my gorgeous Will."

"You…you look like a scruffy rooster and your breath is terrible," Will laughed, teasing at Hannibal's hair and making more pieces stick straight up. Hannibal glared at him, but there was no heat in the look. When the doctor brought up a hand to smooth his hair, Will caught it. "No, don't. You're perfect like this – please don't wreck it."

Hannibal grinned, rerouting his hand to Will's jaw as he kissed him. "If it pleases you, I'll never brush it again. I shall attend my sessions and the opera with wild hair, a scruffy chin, and terrible breath."

"No. This is just for me." Will ran his fingertips over Hannibal's stubble with a smile. "The rest of the world can have the suits and the hair gel. No one else is allowed to have you like this, this beautiful."

"I promise you," Hannibal rubbed his chin along Will's neck just to watch the skin redden over the boy's quickening pulse. "You have me either way."

Will grinned. "So, what do you want to do this morning?"

Hannibal hummed, glancing down the duvet at the prominent tent over Will's groin. "The same thing you want to do, I believe."

"Don't be so base, Hannibal!" Will frowned, his eyes dancing. He slapped the older man's hands away from him and pulled up the covers as if preserving his modesty. "I have very delicate sensibilities!"

Hannibal raised a brow at Will before disappearing under the covers. Will squawked and laughed as he felt the older man shimmying down his body. Eventually, Hannibal's movements stopped and Will could take the suspense no longer – he threw the covers back to stare at the man laying across his legs.

Hannibal watched Will with mischievous red eyes, his chin resting on the knob of Will's hip. With a slight smirk, Hannibal ducked his head, lifting one of Will's thighs and nuzzling at the soft flesh. Hannibal's stubble raked across the sensitive skin and Will made an ungodly high-pitched noise, his whole body arching off the bed at the sensation. "Your sensibilities are very delicate indeed, Will."

Will didn't respond, just blinked languidly as Hannibal rubbed his prickly jaw along the younger man's thighs. Fine tremors took over Will's body, his cock twitching and growing dark red in color. "H-han-"

"Shhhh, darling," Hannibal whispered, his lips brushing feather light at the base of Will's cock. "I think it's time for another lesson."

The sun was warming his face when Will next opened his eyes. He frowned when his hands found cool sheets instead of a warm doctor beside him. He was about to call out for Hannibal when he heard the *clang* of a pan in the distance.

Will settled back in bed. Far be it from him to deny Hannibal the pleasure of serving him breakfast in bed. Will was musing whether or not he should pretend to be asleep when he heard an odd rattling from the nightstand. He squinted at the drawer before remembering Hannibal had put his phone in it sometime last night. With a small groan, Will rolled over to grab it, in case it was a patient with an emergency.

When Will opened the drawer, he froze. His phone was alone, next to plans for the Verger Estate. Something sharp and sour pooled on Will's tongue as he reached for the phone, his heartbeat already picking up.

Mason Verger – 4 unread texts

Fuck.

Will nearly dropped the phone. He'd forgotten all about Mason, forgotten since the moment Hannibal had-

And then the phone fell from Will's fingers. He felt nauseated, his head spinning as he stumbled out of bed to retrieve the phone.

We have plenty of time, then. The words rang in Will's ears. God he was such a fucking fool. Such a pathetic fucking child to have fallen for such an obvious-

No. NO. Hannibal wouldn't have, he'd seen the love in his eyes, he'd seen the care he took. He wouldn't have.

"What does fear smell like?"

"It's acrid, bitter."

Will closed his eyes, trying to control his breathing. That scent, that fucking scent that had been all over Hannibal for a week. Will kept ignoring it, kept telling himself that this was the only way to prove to Hannibal… And now…

The phone buzzed again from the bedroom floor.

Taking as deep a breath as his lungs could bear, Will forced himself to stand. He kept breathing as Hannibal showed him as his trembling fingers found the dresser, he threw on a pair of old jeans and a sweatshirt, he needed the warmth as chills encompassed his body.

When he was dressed, and breathing nearly normally, Will finally allowed himself to reach for the phone.

Where are you?

I'm not a patient man, Mr. Graham.

Don't you want to be my friend?

Will's hand froze when he saw a response, one he most definitely did not write.

My apologies, Mr. Verger, I had another engagement. I hope you enjoyed your dinner.

Will let the tears come, blurring his vision as he scrolled through the rest of Mason's increasingly angry texts. The final message was a picture, Mason grinning into the camera, an arm wrapped around Margot's throat. Margot's eye was swollen shut, the other teary and wide with terror. Will wiped his eyes as he read the caption.

Margot missed you at dinner, we'll talk soon.

Clutching the phone in his hand, Will tried to think what to do. His instinct was to ask Hannibal, but look at all the good that had done him. Hannibal must have known, must have guessed that Mason would have taken his anger out on someone if Will hadn't show up. Why would he…?

I wouldn't have had to make such a distasteful choice if you displayed even an ounce of understanding as to the seriousness of the situation.

Hannibal's words rang in Will's head. He was another distasteful choice, sex a necessity to achieve its purpose. Everything about last night, all the whispered words and joy, had been a manipulation, a desperate final attempt to keep Will controlled.

"I couldn't decide what would be better, feeding you bits of pancake and dripping syrup over your chin or feeding you a protein scramble for energy," Hannibal nudged open the door with his hip, carrying a tray full of food. His face was bright and his smile easy. "I chose to make both. I also called the travel agent, our tickets are booked for Florence, I thought perhaps a detour in Palermo would be nice, there are several churches I've described to you that I think you should see."

Will held his phone up and Hannibal froze for two full breaths before slowly setting the tray of food on the dresser. The smile was gone now, and replaced with Hannibal's careful neutral expression. Will sneered at it. "What was the plan? Keep me in bed until we left for Florence? Hope I was too stupid to- *shit* I guess I was too stupid to think, wasn't I?"

"Will, darling, if you'll just let me-"

"Was this just another *distasteful* choice? Just another task you had to force yourself to do to get what you wanted."

"Of course not." Hannibal approached Will slowly, his hands raised in a defensive posture they'd practiced together.

"Did you even want to?" Will whispered, his throat felt like it was closing.

Hannibal's shoulders dropped, he looked stricken. "You know that's ridiculous."

"Do I?"

"Will, don't be so childis-" Will plowed his fist into Hannibal's jaw. It was a sloppy punch, one Hannibal would have lectured him about, but it was hard to set his stance and follow through with tears streaming down his face.

"I'm not childish, it's worse than that. I'm foolish. I'm your fucking fool." Hannibal righted himself and reached for Will. There was nothing he wanted more in the world than Hannibal's arms around him. To be told he misunderstood, that it was a bad dream and to come back to bed. But he could see it again in Hannibal's eyes, the fear, the doubt, the bright spark of mania that made him so desperate he'd throw away his carefully crafted courting plan just to keep Will from the Verger estate. Will recoiled, letting the tears fall. "Do not follow me."

Will ran from the house, grabbing his phone and replying to Mason's last message. He apologized profusely for his absence, mentioned a stomach bug and how embarrassed he was to have spent the night on the toilet. Mason replied within 10 minutes, telling Will that he had better be at dinner tonight, at 8pm, and to be ready to apologize when he arrived.

Nothing could keep me away Will replied, pocketing his phone without answering the incoming call from Hannibal.

Chapter End Notes

Programming Note:
I'm taking a one week hiatus on this fic during the holidays. I've written the world's goofiest Christmas fic and frankly I don't think I can handle all the baking/cooking I have to do plus post two fics. SO. Final Boy will be back January 2 and run out the rest of the chapters uninterrupted.

Next Up:
What happens at Verger Manor STAYS at Verger Manor.

The Killer Gets Caught

Chapter Summary

Will goes to see Mason Verger. It goes about as well as one would imagine...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will managed to get back into the house without seeing Hannibal. He walked up the stairs and into his room to shower. This time, he locked his fucking door.

As Will waited for the shower to heat, he could still smell Hannibal on his skin. He closed his eyes and stepped under the spray, water sluicing the scent from his body. For a breath, he imagined Hannibal stepping under the water behind him, wrapping strong arms around his body and drawing Will to his chest.

The worst part, the part that left Will feeling raw and nauseated under the hot spray, was that Will desperately wanted Hannibal to sneak into the shower. He wanted this to be over, he wanted his doctor back. Whether Hannibal snuck into the shower now or begged on his knees later, Will would forgive him. He hated himself for his weakness when it came to Hannibal. And he hated the doctor more for not exploiting it, for not kicking in his door and holding Will until he cried out all his frustration and agreed to run away to Italy and pretend none of this ever happened.

But this was for the best, Will knew. He needed to prove to Hannibal that he didn't need the doctor's help, that he was every bit the natural predator Hannibal was. It was the only way to make Hannibal see him as an equal and not some precious object to keep in a gilded cage. Hannibal had to know Will didn't need him, but had chosen him.

Equals or nothing at all.

Will dressed with little fanfare, glancing over his shoulder every now and then and feeling disappointed when he saw no shadow beneath the door. Where the hell was Hannibal? It wasn't like him to be so unavailable when Will was angry. He wore a plain black suit; one Hannibal had given him for Christmas that was cut with freedom of movement in mind. It wouldn't do rip a seam while choking out a guard.

Running his fingers over his ties, Will hesitated - none of them felt right.

On soft feet, Will unlocked his door and peeked into the hall. The house was dark and cavernous. It felt uninviting and imposing. It felt like it did before Will had started thinking of it as *their home*. He searched each shadow for Hannibal, disappointment coiling in his gut when he couldn't find the doctor lurking. With a small sigh, Will padded toward Hannibal's

bedroom, finding the door ajar, but no man inside. Will walked to Hannibal's closet and found what he wanted: a blue and bronze paisley silk tie. Will let it slip through his fingers once before removing it from the drawer and knotting it around his throat. The weight of the silk resting against the marks Hannibal had mouthed on his skin was comforting, in spite of how angry he was.

Will looked himself over in the mirror once, nodding at his reflection before slipping on his brogues. He was in the foyer before he spotted movement. Hannibal emerged from the study, posture perfect and hands still, but looking like he'd been to war. He'd combed his hair, but hadn't bothered to shave, Hannibal's whole complexion looking drawn and pale. Though the doctor had changed into fresh slacks, he still wore the rumpled shirt from last night, the collar upturned.

It smells like me. Will realized.

"Will," Hannibal reached out, stepping closer. Will felt his body waver, urging him to run into those strong arms.

Instead, Will held out a hand. "You can stay where you fucking are."

Hannibal raised his hands in defeat, leaning against the wall in the foyer and watching Will with those bloody eyes.

"Last night was the happiest I've been in years." Will could hear the bitterness in his voice, he let his anger seep into every word. "And now…Now, it's the worst night of my life, and I've had a few fucking bad ones, Hannibal."

Hannibal flinched as if struck. "I should not have used last night as I did, but you must know what it meant to me. I will treasure it as I treasure all of our moments-"

Will made a frustrated noise. "Why won't you just say you love me? I know you do."

Hannibal shook his head. "Not like this, not when you have any cause to doubt me or see it as a manipulation."

Will scoffed.

"That's why you didn't say it last night. You knew I'd-" Will thought back to their night, and all the love he saw in Hannibal. How careful the man had been with Will in his arms. He let his head fall back against the polished wood in the foyer, blinking to keep his tears at bay. "Do you at least regret what you did, even a little?"

"I regret withholding from you for these months. I regret every night I've ever spent without the scent of you in my nose and the taste of you on my tongue." Will looked at Hannibal, still leaning against the far wall. His mask was gone now, stubble stark against pale skin and eyes peering at Will through the darkness. Will could see the love in those bloodstained eyes, but fear shone brighter, it danced in the hollows coloring Hannibal's whole face. "I regret giving you any reason to doubt how deeply- how completely you have captivated me."

“It should have been beautiful.” Will croaked, his throat tightening.

“It was, Will.” Hannibal’s voice had that stern tone, the one he hadn’t heard since the Louis Graves debacle. The doctor stood, but seemed to halt himself before crossing the foyer to Will. His shoulders slumped as he rooted himself to the spot, eyes sparkling in the low light. “It was the most beautiful night of my life.”

“Mine too.” Will whispered, a tear tracking down his cheek. Hannibal’s lip curled and he lunged forward, trying tuck Will into his arms as the boy sobbed. Will allowed himself to melt just a little into those familiar arms, but when he inhaled, that acrid scent was back, souring the sandalwood and rosemary. With a shuddering breath, Will shoved at Hannibal. The doctor allowed himself to be pushed hard into the wall. He made no move to stop Will’s hands when they balled and battered his chest. “Do you know how much it hurt, how fucking *wrong* you were to-”

“I’m sorry... My Will…” Hannibal reached up but Will smacked his hands away, seething in the small distance between them. “I just wanted to keep you here, to keep you with me.”

“To keep me safe.” The words were bitter on Will’s tongue.

“To make sure you stayed in my arms, where you belong.” Anger was flickering at the back of Hannibal’s deceptively calm tone. Will laughed in Hannibal’s face.

“You think you need to be there, or what? I’ll stab myself? I’m not just some fucking scared kid anymore, Hannibal. I can do this without you. I haven’t needed you for any of it since I was 17!” Will snarled. “You think I’m afraid of Mason fucking Verger?”

Will made a startled noise when Hannibal’s hands flew up, grabbing him and pressing him into the wall. The man before him looked frantic, eyes wild as he pushed his weight into the hold. “I am afraid of Mason Verger. We need more time to look at the security, to determine a way I can slip in. There’s too great a risk if I can’t reach you-”

“I don’t need you there!” Will struggled but found himself held fast.

Though his head was lowered to prevent Will from attempting a headbutt, Will saw a tear catch on the laugh lines of Hannibal's right eye. “I cannot lose you as I lost Mischa.”

Will stopped struggling, deflating a little under Hannibal’s hands. He could see it so clearly in his mind: Crumpled flowers and shattered plates on the floor, a fragment of a torn dress slowly saturating with blood. The little boy held down on the floor, screaming and cutting his own palm with the shard of a teacup he clutched. “Mischa was a child, Hannibal.”

“I could not protect her. I won’t chance that again.” Hannibal tightened his grip. “You’re too precious, too-”

Will slipped his foot around Hannibal’s ankle and yanked, unbalancing the doctor long enough to grab him and slam him against the wall. He fisted Hannibal’s shirt, bringing the man to his level.

“I am not a child and I don’t want your fucking protection. I want to be an equal, not whatever the hell you think this is right now.” Will waved his hand between them. Hannibal moved, but Will was ready, cutting off his lunge and shoving him back into the wall. “I’m doing this, Hannibal. You can lock me up, you can hold me down, but I’ll fucking get out. You know I will.”

Hannibal sighed, his body lax beneath Will’s hands. Will nodded, releasing the man and moving to the door.

“If you won’t accept my protection, please accept hers.” Will turned, hand on the doorknob. Hannibal held out his knife, freeing it from its sheath. He had polished and sharpened it before offering it to Will. The boy thought about when he’d done the same a lifetime ago, an apology to his doctor for his own stupid behavior. Hannibal re-sheathed the blade before flipping it in his grip, offering Will the hilt. “You earned her months ago, I had thought to give her to you in Cappella Palatina when we visited.”

Will’s breath caught. His fingers wrapped around the blade before he realized he was taking it. He could see Hannibal’s plan in his mind. He would wake Will up before dawn, dragging the grumbling boy through Palazzo Reale and into the chapel before the sun rose. Will had seen the pictures, the golden walls and mosaics – a marriage of practical Norman architecture, imperious Arabic arches and Byzantine ostentatiousness. The chapel was a perfect example of harmony achieved by fusing vastly different tastes and sensibilities – of opposites working as one.

There, under the golden altar with a mosaic dome of Christ watching, Hannibal would kneel and offer Will the only piece of his sister left in the world. More precious than any diamond and far rarer than a ring – his gift of Mischa would be a proposal, unneeded to keep Will by his side, but still meant with every fiber of his being. Will would fall into Hannibal’s arms, bathed in golden light and seal their union with kiss after kiss until one of the priests found them and scolded them away.

Gripping the handle, Will ran his thumb along the carvings, paying his respects to Mischa as he let the last of the fantasy play through his mind. Hannibal didn’t move when Will wrapped his arms around him, pulling the doctor down to kiss his neck and nuzzle into the stubble. The acrid scent was still there, nearly overwhelming this close.

“I love you, you bastard,” Will whispered. Leaning back, Will caught Hannibal’s gaze and offered him a fragile smile. He held up the knife. “I’ll come back to you after I’ve fed her Mason’s blood, and not a moment before.”

Something delicate flickered in Hannibal’s maroon eyes as he tugged on the curls at the base of Will’s skull. “Come back to me.”

“I always will, you fucking fool.” Will let his hand drag along Hannibal’s jaw as he left. He couldn’t look back, even as he felt the doctor’s gaze on his shoulders. Gripping Mischa tighter, he ran for his car, the flowers on the hilt biting into his hand.

The guard at the gate waved Will through with a placid smile that immediately set Will's nerves on edge. He had never driven up the main driveway and he had to admit the large grey façade of the Verger manor was imposing as it loomed in the night sky. A few of its windows glowed yellow, making Will think of a spider, eyes trained on its prey.

Parking, Will took a moment to breathe deep. He picked up Hannibal's knife, now his, and brought it to his lips.

"You help me get through this and I promise I'll keep your asshole brother happy," He told the blade. Slipping the Mischa into his sock and tucking her down so his Chelsea boot covered the bulge, Will opened the car door and headed for the grand doors.

Carlo opened the door, eyeing him with a grimace before turning and walking past the grand staircase and into an open doorway. Will raised an eyebrow and followed. The grand hall of the Verger Estate was all dark wood and yellowing paintings in gilded frames. It was as if someone had tried to copy the décor of Hannibal's home, but stripped away the whimsy. This was a charmless mausoleum to patrician wealth. The paintings were bought to impress, not inspire, the floors were polished to a mirrored sheen. Will was rather surprised there wasn't a porcine theme throughout the room.

When he strolled into the room Carlo had entered, Will stopped short. Mason sat at the end of a long table, Margot to his left. Mason giggled as he tapped at Margot's swollen eye, grinning when the girl flinched. Will noted that the chair to Mason's right had restraints attached to the arms.

"Will!" Mason clapped and stood. Margot's eyes were wide, frantic. She flicked them around as if she were trying to tell him something. Mason gestured to the large man to Will's right. "You've met Carlo, of course. But did I introduce you to Matteo?"

Will heard one footstep before something connected to the back of his neck, sending an electric shock through his body before plunging the world into blackness.

Will jerked to consciousness. He could feel the straps on his wrists and didn't bother glancing down, instead, he looked around the room to assess the numbers he was facing.

"Mr. Graham!" Mason crowed, his grinning face filling Will's field of vision. "I was starting to get worried we'd have to start the party without you. Margot! Get Mr. Graham a drink!"

Mason sat back down and Will watched Margot go to the bar cart and fill a glass with amber liquid from a glass container. She plunked a silver straw in the drink and sat it by Will's hand. As she retreated, Will could see her head twitch, just the tiniest *no* movement. Mason didn't seem to notice, too busy patting her bruised face when she sat back down.

"Let me introduce you to the rest of this pajama party!" Mason indicated Carlo and two other men by the door. "You know Carlo, of course, and this is Matteo, Carlo's…son?

Cousin? Those Italians breed so much it's hard to keep them straight. Good hearty stock, but one must control the population expansion. That's Tommaso, he's one of them too. I'll let you worry about getting the family tree right."

"L-let me go," Will's voice shook. He saw a waiver of interest in Mason's eyes as he took the bait.

"Now Mr. Graham, I haven't even introduced everyone yet. This," Mason gestured to a huge man just to Will's left. "is Cordell. He's quite the discovery. A background in medicine and an interest in cooking. He's here to make sure we all enjoy ourselves."

Mason took a drink from his martini and indicated that Will should do the same. Keeping his eyes low and his breathing panicked, Will let a sob escape his lips. Mason smiled, one finger reaching out to tap at the glass more insistently. Will brought the glass up with shaking hands, but pretended to falter, dropping the glass to the carpeted floor.

"Bad manners, Mr. Graham!" Mason tutted. He snapped his fingers and a maid appeared from seemingly nowhere to pick up the glass and blot at the floor. "Nothing worse than a man who can't hold his liquor, right Margot?"

Margot nodded, eyes fixed on the table.

"You keep dropping things and I won't be inviting you to our little pajama party." Mason ran his hand through Will's hair, snagging the curls and pulling hard. Will wanted to sneer, to surge forward and take a chunk out of Mason's wrist, but it was too risky, especially with Margot in the room. "Don't make me regret this, Will. I've gone to SUCH trouble to make sure we have a good time."

"W-what do you w-want?" Will let tears flow. Mason immediately retrieved his silver case and sopped a few up.

He stored all but one, which he dropped into his martini glass to join a similar bit of paper, taking a sip. "You pair well with Margot, Mr. Graham."

"Huh?" Will glanced at Margot, who was silently crying.

"Will, I can call you Will, can't I?" Mason gave Will's cheek a firm pat that was much closer to a slap than it needed to be. Will recoiled, pretending to panic while he calculated. He needed to get Margot out of the room, otherwise she'd be used as a shield or a hostage. Mason grabbed Will's chin and shook his head. "Well, Will, as you know I have an interest in breeding. Papa taught me when I was a boy if the stock yards didn't have the pig you wanted, you make it."

Mason ran a finger down Will's cheek; Will flinched away.

"That's what I showed you the other day, my little piggy experiment. Remember, you seemed to like my little piggies didn't you, Will?" Trembling, Will nodded. "Well Papa always said that the meat business was a people business and that got me thinking…"

Mason smiled, that vacant doll expression. Will let himself picture knocking every capped tooth out of that blond skull before he shook and murmured, “I-I don’t understand.”

“Of course you don’t. Every now and then a really good quality pig is born out of bad breeding stock.” Mason lunged forward, gripping Will’s hair and yanking back this head. Will made a terrified noise as Mason traced his nose. “A very pretty pig, one that stands out among the rest. Sound, fast growing, muscular, lean, and reproductively efficient - that little piggy might be worthy of cross-breeding. You still risk genetic imperfections, you understand, but sometimes…sometimes you get something special.”

Mason released Will, moving around the table to wind his hand around Margot’s braid, gripping tight. “Now Margot here comes from good stock. She’s pedigreed, sound, muscular, lean – a pretty little glit if ever there was one. There’s just one…little…flaw…”

Mason moved Margot’s head from side to side, pausing to stroke her cheek. “Margot here is a troublesome breeder. Papa thought sending her to therapy might help her queerness, but honestly, I think a different tack would be faster. Margot here is going to produce a good Verger heir. A boy from impeccable stock, you see. But a glit that won’t breed isn’t going to produce a very good litter, is she, Will?”

Will blinked, tears falling down his face. “Wh-what?”

“Margot here needs to be an experienced sow before we trust her with a Verger litter, don’t you think?” Mason used his grip on Margot to nod her head. “So, I thought, why not do a little experimentation? You’re a pretty boar and she’s a finicky glit…sure, you’ll make a few abominations because of your genetic flaws, but let’s not worry about the ones we won’t keep.”

Mason crouched down, lips to Margot’s ear. “Just think of it, little piggies with curly hair and curly tails – just perfect for me to play with. What do you think, Margot? You’re a game girl. And once you’re an experienced sow, well we can raise the real Verger ones together.”

Fine tremors broke out through Margot’s body. Mason smiled, kissing her cheek. “See, Will? She’s excited!”

Will shook his head, rearing back in the chair. Cordell caught him immediately and righted him. Will filed away that the large man was strong, right handed, and fairly quick for such a large guy. “N-no, I won’t! I w-won’t!”

Mason clapped his hands, that terrible smile growing as he cocked his head to look at Will. “I can see why you think that. Everyone thinks that at first. But Papa didn’t raise a quitter, and I know something you don’t.”

“What’s that?” Will was coming to terms with the fact that he would need to make a move soon – before anything worse happened to him and Margot.

“I know how to get animals to obey. Let me show you,” Mason gestured and Tommaso left the room. Will heard some sort of animal whimpering noises before Tommaso reappeared

pushing a large wire cage on wheels. In it, Will could see two cowering dogs, a small white and brown terrier and a sandy-haired mutt. Both dogs were filthy, reeking of shit and piss which seemed caked to the bottom of their cage. Will felt his chest constrict at the sight, he could smell the bitterness wafting from both dogs, they were so afraid.

Tommaso coiled his fingers around the wire of the cage as he pushed it near Mason. The terrier took the opportunity to leap up and bite Tommaso's hand. Tommaso recoiled crying, out, before grabbing his stun gun and shocking the metal cage. Both dogs seized and screamed, Margot made a whining noise, Will struggled in his restraints, Mason giggled.

"Oh I like you," Mason tapped at the cage where the little terrier's head lolled against the wiring. Mason continued laughing smacking at the cage until the dog came around and managed a weak snarl. Mason looked up, eyes fixed on Will. "I'd like you to meet…well to be honest, I never bothered to learn their names. But these are two of the dogs I adopted from the animal shelter. They've been in this cage for…oh let's call it a week, shall we? I stopped feeding them four days ago and let me tell you, these little fellas are hungry!"

Mason pulled a dog treat from his pocket and placed it just outside the cage. Immediately both dogs began pawing at their cage, snapping their teeth at the bars. "Now, Margot and I have a little bet going, don't we Margot?"

"No, we don't."

"Now I told Margot I think it's going to be the little one who breaks first."

"Breaks what?" Will examined his restraints. He just needed a little distraction – 20 seconds would do it. Maybe he could signal Margot?

"I've done this experiment 20 times. Every time one of these tame little pooches breaks, kills his cellmate, and eats them! I think it's going to be the little one, who do you think it'll be, Will?"

"W-why?"

"Mostly as a reminder to Margot, and now to you." Mason walked over to Will, dropping his voice to whisper in his ear. "Everyone thinks they have free will. That they won't do terrible things. I wonder how long you'll be in that cage, Will, before you decide to be a good little boar?"

Will snapped. Fuck the innocent little lamb act, he was going to bite off Mason's smug fucking lips and deal with the consequences as they came. Will turned, bearing his teeth.

"Mr. Verger!"

Mason moved just in time, seemingly not noticing Will's expression. "What, Carlo? It's rude to interrupt."

Carlo held up a tablet, a grainy night vision image showed a lot of movement, but none of it was discernible. "There's a man on the grounds."

Will's chest flooded with warmth. He hoped the Vergers recorded their security camera footage, he'd want to watch Hannibal dance through the bodies of the Verger men as he came for Will.

"What? Who is that?" Mason was looking at the tablet, then let out a frustrated noise. "I thought I said we weren't too be interrupted. Where are the guards? I want the guards brought in here."

Mason walked out of the room with Cordell. Tommaso followed, handing Matteo a key telling him in Italian to stay and keep an eye on Will. Matteo protested but Carlo intervened, sternly telling the younger man to do as he was told. Matteo sullenly accepted the key and turned back to the prisoners in the room.

Will smiled at Matteo. He winked at Margot before addressing the man in Italian. "Do you know what Florenzer meant in Renaissance Germany?"

"Shut up."

"It meant sodomite, Matteo. A little boy who meekly did what the bigger stronger men told him to – whether that was bend over and moan, or watch the prisoners." Will's smile grew as Matteo snarled. "A common practice in Florence, hence the name."

"I'm from Sardinia." Matteo shoved at Will.

"Sardinia, Florence – as long as you do what you're told. You seem like a good boy."

"I'll knock your fucking teeth out you-"

Will furrowed his brow in mock shock. "Do you kiss Carlo with that mouth? Or does he let you kiss him at all?"

Matteo let out an angry cry grabbing at Will's collar and shaking him. He opened his mouth for another threat, but Will was faster, latching onto Matteo's throat with his teeth and tearing through the flesh. Matteo spasmed a few times, dropping to the ground. Margot blinked four times before she rose, walking slowly over to the body. Bending down, she retrieved the key from the pool of blood surrounding Matteo and undid Will's restraints.

"What did you say to him?" Margot asked. Will spit the chunk of flesh on the floor. Margot handed him a napkin from the table.

"I told him Carlo didn't love him as much as he thought," Will said, wiping his face. "Homophobic bastard."

"Carlo was his brother."

Will laughed, "Oh, well, then he probably should have been mad."

Margot watched Will carefully, backing up a few paces. Will moved to the side table, grabbing a few rolls from a bread display. He smelled them, then held them up. "Any drugs in these?"

“No.”

Will nodded and walked over to the cage. He shoved the rolls between the bars smiling when the dogs gobbled them up.

Standing, Will looked at Margot. “When you see Hannibal-”

Margot frowned. “Dr. Lecter?”

Will smiled, “You’ll see him. When you do, tell him I’m leading them to Mason’s barn, OK?”

Margot still looked uncertain, but nodded. Will moved for the back entrance but paused. “How bad will it be for you, when they find you in here alone?”

“As bad as it normally is, I’m sure.”

Will grimaced. “Should I hit you? So they know you didn’t help?”

Margot sighed. “Probably.”

Will raised his hand, but faltered slightly, looking at Margot’s bruised face. Margot watched his hesitance and laughed. “You’re not the first man to hit me.”

“No, but I’ll be the last.” Will promised.

Margot touched his face softly, smiling. “I see why Dr. Lecter was so afraid for you. Do you really belong among the wolves, Mr. Graham?”

“I belong with Hannibal,” Will said, drawing back and hitting Margot in the jaw. It was a terrible punch, one Hannibal would have *tsked* at. But it did the job, splitting Margot’s lip. “Go lay on the floor, near Matteo, let them find you and wake you.”

“Should I tell my brother where you’re heading?”

“Tell him I ran out the back.”

Margot nodded, licking her bleeding lip. “Alright.”

Will smiled. “Tell Hannibal I’ll see him soon.”

Taking off for the back door, Will felt his blood pumping. He had a lot to prepare, once he got to the barn.

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Will gets dangled over some pigs, Hannibal performs some murder ballet, and these idiots STILL manage to argue about their relationship mid bloodshed.

The Killer Meets His Match

Chapter Summary

Will is dangled over some pigs. Hannibal performs a murder ballet. Mason learns why it's never a good idea to upset two serial killers.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will could hear the commotion from the Verger mansion as he ran for Mason's barn. He felt the impulse to turn around, run back through the doors and watch Hannibal dance. He'd seen glimpses of what the man could do, spinning around Will's attacks with a fluidity that made his brutality beautiful. Hannibal had told him stories – of the night he found four of the men who took Mischa from him and killed them all in the backroom of a bar, of the time a man brought him to a house, only for Hannibal to find a group of men waiting to take turns with him.

Will had dreamed of those kills. The image of Hannibal spinning and dipping between ribbons of blood and gore oddly comforting. Those dreams kept Bev's accusations and Matthew's hissing threats from his mind at night, and allowed Will to find peace among the terrible beauty of Hannibal's kills.

Now, he had a chance to see Hannibal cut through a crowd and he had to miss it to lure Mason fucking Verger to his rightful death.

"I bet it's beautiful," Will said, startling the guard by the barn just long enough for Will to snap his neck and leave his body in a heap by the door. Will waited, listening as heavy footsteps approached. The guard's partner was easier to kill. Will bashed the man's skull against the iron door of the bar, cleaving it.

The barn was oddly unguarded inside. Will took the time to pop the panel off the locking mechanism and yank the wires Hannibal noted in the schematics. Now he couldn't be bolted inside, at least.

Will was trying to put the cover back on the electrical panel when he heard the soft step. He dodged just as Tommaso's fist crashed into the panel. Throwing his leg out, Will sent the man spinning backwards. There was another sound to his left, Will turned. Carlo was approaching, knife in one of his hands. Will set his feet to barrel forward, but paused.

Don't react, Will, think. Your empathy is your greatest tool.

Hannibal's voice filled Will with warmth. Instead of attacking, Will retreated to the wall, leaving his back guarded as the men circled. He let himself reach out, assess.

Mason won't want them to kill me. It's unlikely that Carlo will use that knife unless he really has to. He probably thinks he can drive me towards Tommaso, steal my focus and let him attack me from behind. Carlo is the more experienced fighter, his steps are surer, his hands are steady. Tommaso's right hand is either broken or badly bruised, it'll be weaker. He's sweating a lot, his eyes are dilated. He's either high or afraid, maybe both. It'll be easier to take out Tommaso, but smarter to go for Carlo first. If I'm overwhelmed, I want the nervous one trying to secure me. Carlo has blood on his hands and chest, he found Matteo and cradled his body. He knows I'm not an innocent lamb, but he doesn't know the extent of my skills. Easier to approach him and provoke him. When he attacks, take his legs out and use his knife on him. It'll be faster to slit his throat, but if I gut him, I'll throw Tommaso more.

Will set his feet, plan in place. He could hear Hannibal purring *remarkable boy* in his ear and the thought made him smile.

"What are you smiling at, stronzo?" Carlo asked, slashing at Will and frowning slightly when the boy didn't falter back.

"Matteo tasted sweet. I wonder what you'll taste like?" Will said in Italian. The language change caused Carlo to pause. It was enough. Will charged, keeping his eyes on Carlo's shoulder. When the muscles shifted and indicated Carlo was planning an upwards slash at Will's chest – painful, but not fatal – Will hit the ground in a slide. Carlo wasn't as fast as Hannibal, Will had time to kick his leg up and knock the knife from man's hand and guide the brunt of his weight into Carlo's knee.

Carlo crumpled with a cry. Will could hear Tommaso shouting in Italian, but the voice wasn't getting closer, so he focused on catching Carlo's knife and driving it into the prone man's stomach. He ripped the blade through Carlo's clothes, fat and muscle, using his momentum and shoulders as Hannibal had demonstrated countless times. Blood poured from Carlo as the man screamed and grasped at it. The wounds steamed in the cold barn and Will grinned watching the tendrils of Carlo's life snake into the open air.

Will looked up, when his eyes met Tommaso's, the guard stumbled back a few steps. Will bared his teeth, more feral warning than grin. He stood, tossing the knife and spinning it between his fingers in an imitation of Hannibal's typical showmanship. Tommaso kept his eyes on the blade, a rookie mistake, but Will wasn't feeling charitable enough to correct him.

"Were they your family, Tommaso?" Will asked in Italian. "Am I going to kill a whole family tonight? That'll be a first for me."

Tommaso opened his mouth, but paused, his eyes flicking to the right for a second.

Fuck.

Will tried to dodge whatever was behind him, but was too late, he felt the electrodes of a taser embed in his left shoulder seconds before the shock took him down. He didn't lose consciousness, just the ability to stand. That told him two things – whoever was holding the taser wanted him awake for the next bit, and they were more experienced than Tommaso.

“Work smarter, not harder,” Cordell stepped over Carlo’s body to grab Will by the collar, dragging him to Tommaso. “Put him on the hook. You can handle that, can’t you? I’ll return in 10 minutes with Mr. Verger, be ready or you’ll join him.”

Tommaso hauled Will up the stairs to the metal platform overlooking Mason’s special pigs. Will let himself be limp, head lolling whenever shifted. Tommaso was still nervous, hands shaking as he dumped Will on the grating, it would be a shame to put him on alert. Slowly, Will reached into his sock and pulled out his knife. He tucked the blade into his right cuff and resumed his limp position.

Will watched as the man moved to an old chest on the platform. Hannibal would like that chest, he’d restore the dark wood and line the inside with bloody crimson vellum. He’d probably use it to store antlers. Will found himself smiling at the notion and wondering if he should buy Hannibal a chest for Christmas when Tommaso finally straightened, holding a straightjacket in his hands.

Will feigned unconsciousness as Tommaso approached him again. The guard nudged him with a foot four times before he felt confident enough to bend down and begin slipping the jacket over Will’s limbs. Will let his mind drift to Hannibal’s study, let himself feel Hannibal’s hands tying the restraints. At the time, Will had complained vociferously that outside of a Harry Houdini tribute show, there was absolutely no reason to know or care how to escape from a straightjacket.

Indulge me Hannibal whispered, and when had Will ever been able to resist doing that? He had immediately blinked at the authoritative tone, going sweet and obedient as he let Hannibal’s skills lecture wash over him. *Fill your chest, Will, hold your breath, expand your chest as much as possible and hunch your shoulders forward. Once your arms are in the sleeves, pinch at the fabric of the chest, gathering as much as you can, give yourself as many inches as possible.*

Will did this now, subtly expanding himself as much as possible as Tommaso worked him into the jacket. The man shoving his arms into the sleeves had none of Hannibal’s calm assurance, he was rushing. He missed the blade stuffed in Will’s sleeve, even when his fingers brushed against it as he secured the arms. Will let himself be hoisted in the air and onto the hook. He let his breath out and body relax – he could probably slip the bonds now if he wanted, but he needed Hannibal to be in the damn barn. Instead, Will dangled, waiting patiently for who would show first – Hannibal or Mason Verger.

“Well, this little piggy was offered roast beef…and now he gets none.” Will rolled his eyes. God, he hoped Hannibal hurried. Torture and blood he could take, but Mason’s inane prattling was too much for anyone to bear. Mason entered the barn flanked by five guards and Cordell. He walked up the stairs, steps echoing over the squeals of the pigs. Cordell was close behind, stopping only to grab something in Carlo’s viscera before ascending. Mason pushed Will lightly, smiling as his body began to swing. “Now, I can’t quite decide, Will, maybe you can help me. I was under the impression you were a good little piggy, and now I just don’t know what to think. I’m torn though, between making you a barrow and playing with you a little longer or-”

Mason nodded and Cordell tossed what looked like a chunk of liver into the pen. A deafening chorus of squeals and hooves erupted as the pigs pushed and fought for a taste of blood. Mason smiled. Will raised an eyebrow, no longer rewarding Mason's antics with his terrified innocent act. "As long as I don't have to listen to you, the pigs sound fine."

Clapping his hands, Mason laughed. "Oh you are a spirited little piggy, aren't you?"

Mason shoved at Will again, cackling when he sent the boy swinging. Turning, Mason pulled out a silver knife, studying the blade. "I remember walking the swine fairs with my father. Papa's little silver knife ever at the ready to stick into the back of a pig to check the fat. Those were good funny times. Papa would stab show pigs, such coddled fat little things. Papa taught me to stick the knife in only as deep as necessary to test the thickness of its skin."

Whirling, Mason jabbed the blade into Will's thigh. Will flexed his jaw, letting the pain flow through him, thinking about the systems that caused pain, as Hannibal had shown him. Remaining stoic in the face of Mason's blade would be more upsetting to Verger than anything else he could do presently.

Mason cocked his head, jabbing the blade into Will's calf. "Not going to cry *wee wee wee* all the way home? You're not much of a pig anyway, Will, not enough fat on you. The only place that looks well marbled is…here."

The blade thrust up and into the soft flesh of Will's right ass cheek, and Will saw stars. He thought about the nervous system, he thought about how good it was going to feel to finally get free and rip Mason Verger to shreds, he thought about Hannibal, bed rumpled and grinning like a fool when he opened his eyes to see Will. He blinked, body tense, but silent. Will could feel blood dribbling down the side of his leg.

Mason was right, his father had taught him well. Each stab wound was precisely placed, just enough to get blood flowing without any danger of bleeding out. It would put the pigs in a frenzy and ensure that Will would feel every tooth that sank into his flesh. Will shifted his grip on his knife, tucking it behind himself to begin sawing at the right strap of the straightjacket. He let his breath out and smiled, Will had a lot of room to work with.

"What do you think, Will? Are you ready to go to market?" Will grinned, then kicked his foot out as hard as he could, connecting with Mason's empty smile. Mason lurched back, catching himself on the railing before righting himself. Cordell surged forward, punching Will hard in the stomach. Will wheezed, but felt the strap to the straightjacket break free. He smiled to himself, keeping his hands still. All he had to do now was wait.

Mason was also smiling. His gloved hand touched the blood streaming from his nose. He licked it experimentally before laughing. "I'm going to feed you to my pigs. Cordell!"

Cordell grabbed the switch for the hook and hit a button. Will lurched up a few inches before the switch sparked and the hook stalled. He grinned at Cordell, raising an eyebrow. "Trouble with the electronics? I could take a look. I'm pretty handy."

“What am I paying you for? I want that fixed now!” Mason screeched. He turned to Will. “You’re a brave little piggy now, but we’ll see how stoic you are when your bones are being crushed under my boars’ teeth!”

Cordell grimaced, looking at the switch. He turned to Tommaso, gesturing to Will. “Watch him.”

Tommaso shuffled closer to Will, careful to keep away from the blood dripping from the boy’s legs. Mason smiled up at Will, grabbing the straight jacket and rocking Will back and forth. “I’m going to have Cordell put tourniquets on your legs so you won’t bleed out. Cordell assures me that he can make this last for hours, maybe days. I think it’ll be good for Margot to understand what happens to bad little piggies. Do you think your little boy, the squealer, should see too? I think he might get a kick out of it. I know I wi-”

The barn door slid open with a bang, Mason and the guards turned. There was nothing but the black maw of night to be seen. One of the guards poked forward, raising his gun as he walked into the night. The moment he cleared the door his body was jerked to the side. Loud orders were shouted as the guards formed a defensive semi-circle to ward off whatever lurked in the darkness.

Will checked his surroundings. Mason was shouting orders at the already unsettled guards. Cordell was fiddling with the switch, trying to repair the short. Poor Tommaso was clutching the railing close to Will, trembling as he tried to discern what was just beyond the door.

Taking his chance Will let his right arm fall free quietly. Piking his body, he brought his legs up to wrap around Tommaso’s neck, bringing the man back against his body. Tommaso clawed at Will’s thighs, his fingernails finding a few of the wounds Mason had made. The pain was nearly blinding, but Will held his legs firm. With Tommaso’s body beneath him, Will could cut at the strap between his legs and slip free of the jacket.

Without the suspended straightjacket holding him aloft, both men fell to the ground in a heap. Will’s legs parted and Tommaso was able to get enough air to scream. Cordell turned, immediately launching at Will. But more importantly the guards at the door turned, and Will saw a streak of black fly into the doorway, tackling the first guard.

The next few minutes were spent in beautiful chaos. Will grabbed Tommaso’s neck and wrenched, snapping the man’s spine. He only had a second to appreciate the feeling of the life sagging out of Tommaso’s body before he had to roll to avoid Cordell. He could hear Mason shouting and the cries of men below him, Will desperately wanted to immobilize Cordell so he could see Hannibal work.

Ignoring the pain shooting up his leg, Will got into a crouch. He observed Cordell as the man set his stance, preparing to attack.

He’s big and fast, and that’s served him well through the years, but he doesn’t have any formal training. He’s going to try to trap me, throw himself on me and subdue me with his bulk. He’s too heavy to change directions quickly, if I get him to commit to a direction, I can use his momentum against him.

Will darted right, toward the railing overlooking the pig maze. He stumbled, his knee hitting the ground hard and pulling a groan from him. Cordell rushed him, and Will smiled, easily rolling to his feet and out of Cordell's path. Will grabbed the larger man's neck as he charged past, using the man's momentum to slam his face into the iron railing. Blood poured from Cordell's ruined nose as he fell backwards, eyes unfocused and equilibrium ruined.

He had a few minutes before Cordell got his feet underneath him again, so Will turned to look over the railing at the fight still raging below.

Two guards lay prone on the floor, blood seeping from them in great pools. Hannibal was dancing between the remaining two guards, whirling between them as he ducked blows and struck at the openings in their body armor. Will squinted, finally seeing that Hannibal's weapon of choice for fighting the whole of the Verger security team was a claw hammer. Somehow the blunt tool looked graceful in Hannibal's assured grip – swinging and sweeping as it crumpled knees and smashed hands.

One man managed to get a handgun from his belt – the assault rifles all were armed with had long been knocked to the side by Hannibal and his hammer. Hannibal stilled, watching the bleeding man hold the gun in shaking hands. Will's heart began to beat wildly, he thought about leaping down, trying to stop the bullet by any means he could. Hannibal tilted his head and smiled – just a small crook at the corner of his mouth, but it was enough to calm Will's surge of panic. As the man tried to pull the trigger, Hannibal darted forward. The guard tried to follow Hannibal's swift charge, but shot wide, a bullet landing into the body of one of the guards on the floor.

Hannibal spun away from the gun, snatching the guard's wrist and raising it high before bringing the hammer down on the bones. The gun dropped to the ground shortly before the man did. Hannibal grabbed the guard's head and twisted, the snapping noise rung out above the squeals of the pigs.

Will felt his heart swelling in his body. He was furious he'd never seen this before. He'd experienced hints of Hannibal's strength and feral cunning, but he wasn't prepared for the full beauty of it. Will decided in his next heartbeat that he'd never take another life without that marvelous creature by his side. Hannibal turned to face the last remaining guard, flipping the hammer in his hand as he set his stance. Will wanted to watch the final kill, but he heard the telltale shuffling of Cordell trying to stand behind him.

Will surged toward Cordell, shifting his grip on Mischa's blade. He tackled Cordell back to the ground, stunning him before raising the blade. He was careful about positioning as he sunk the blade into Cordell's right shoulder, twisting it when he had embedded the knife in the larger man's rotator cuff. Cordell howled, body curling as Will yanked the knife out of the man's shoulder, sinking the blade into Cordell's left shoulder and performing the same twist.

Cordell's face had gone very pale. Will watched as the big man tried to lift his arms.

"Work smart, not hard," Will whispered before grabbing the back of Cordell's collar and hauling the man upright. Mason was still screaming at the guard, shouting out

instructions and demanding the death of the intruder. Will shoved Cordell's body toward the railing and looked down.

Hannibal was looming over the final guard, bringing the hammer down over and over on the man's lifeless body.

"HANNIBAL!" The doctor looked up immediately at Will. The younger man's breath caught at the splendid beast watching him. Hannibal was soaked in blood. It dripped from Hannibal's bangs, running in rivulets down his high cheeks. He had a gash on one of those prominent cheekbones, and blood trickled from a cut on the bridge of his nose and a split in his lower lip. His clothes, fine black slacks and sweater, hung from his form, saturated with the blood of others and showing off his heaving, powerful chest. Hannibal blinked as his eyes connected with Will, bloody irises burning with warmth as they raked over Will, checking for injuries. Hannibal panted as he assessed Will, and the younger man could see the faint stain of blood on those crooked teeth.

"Dr. Lecter?" Mason asked, squinting at the man below them.

Will smiled, bringing up the knife to Cordell's throat and slicing through the flesh he found. Arterial spray arched for feet over the floor below, baptizing Hannibal in Will's kill. Will grinned at his doctor, holding Cordell's spasming body as still as he could. "When an artery is severed, it's best to keep your mouth closed."

Hannibal's eyes sparked and he darted for the stairway. Will shoved Cordell's body over the railing and into the pig maze. Turning to Mason, will clapped a hand on his shoulder. Mason looked confused, but not scared. Hannibal had been right about his pathology. "He loves me, but he had to trust that I could take care of myself. Thank you for helping me, Mason."

"What?" Mason scoffed, before bearing his teeth. "Papa has called for the reinforcements by now, I'll feed you both to-"

Will was careful with his punch this time, smashing Mason's nose and dropping the man to the floor in a heap. Hannibal had reached the top of the platform and was watching Will with his wild predator eyes.

"I knew you'd come," Will said with a smile. Hannibal stalked forward, chest rising and falling slowly, eyes blazing. "It's why I waited to kill him. I think we work better together don't you?"

Hannibal tilted his head, eyes still locked on Will. The younger man winked, twirling his knife in his fingers and walking around Mason to lean on the railing over the pigs. Mason stumbled to his feet, smiling at Will before rushing forward.

Will braced for the impact of Mason's body, but the man stopped short, letting out a faint cry. Mason blinked at Will, confused before turning to see the claw of Hannibal's hammer embedded in his shoulder, holding him steady. Will flipped the knife in his grip and shoved it forward, plunging it deep into Mason's abdomen and tearing a jagged line across

the flesh. Mason curled, hands grasping at the wound as blood and viscera spilled past his fingers.

"I'm the Verger heir," Mason hissed. "Papa will find you both and-"

Hannibal grabbed Mason's hair and wrenched his head backwards to whisper in the convulsing man's ear. "Margot will make sure to give your papa a new heir, Mason. And then no one will think of you ever again."

Will pulled the knife from Mason's body and tossed it in the air. Hannibal grabbed the hilt, spun the blade and tore through Mason's neck to the bone. Will closed his eyes and let Hannibal's wrath wash over him with the blood. When he opened them, he gasped.

Hannibal stood before him bathed in blood and snarling – a god carved out of crimson marble tearing into the sacrifices left at his altar. Will dove forward, grabbing Mason's body and casting it aside. It was an unworthy offering to such a force of destruction. Will leaped into Hannibal's arms, wrapping his legs around the doctor's waist.

The kiss was feral, all gnashing teeth and yanking fingers. Will licked at the doctor's mouth, Hannibal tasted of copper and sweat, the boy wanted to devour him whole. Hannibal's hands settled on Will's ass, possessive and hard as they pressed him closer. Will pulled back to lick at the blood on Hannibal's face. The doctor's eyes seemed to glow as he watched Will. "You were magnificent. I want to watch you dance with more people, bathe in their blood."

Hannibal growled, his hands clutching. Will winced when one of Hannibal's fingers sank into Mason's knife wound. Hannibal pulled away from Will's kisses, glancing at his hand and frowning at the blood. Will watched as the doctor he loved filtered back into those wild blood colored eyes. "You're injured."

"I'm fi-" Will sighed as Hannibal sat him down, spinning to assess the damage on Will's body. Will swatted at him. "Three stab wounds, calf, thigh, and ass. None are deep, I'm fine."

Hannibal glared at him. "Why would you allow him to stab you so many times?"

"It's your fault, if you had gotten here faster I wouldn't have had to stall for time."

Something bright and terrible flickered in Hannibal's stare. He backed Will toward the pigs. "YOU LET HIM STAB YOU AS A STALLING TACTIC?"

Will shrugged, trying not to look sullen. "You weren't here yet and I wanted you to see me-"

"You miserable child," Hannibal hissed.

"I'm 18, that makes me a miserable adult." Will glared, shoving at Hannibal. He gestured to Mason's graying body. "At least I didn't sleep with him to buy time!"

Hannibal snatched the lapels of Will's jacket, shaking the boy before him. He looked enraged. "I should carve you open and leave you here with the rest of the pigs you vile, hateful little-"

Will thrust his arms up and twisted, breaking Hannibal's hold. He grabbed the collar of Hannibal's soaked sweater, blood seeping between his fingers as he twisted it in his grip and forced Hannibal toward him. The kiss was clumsy at first, just a mash of lips. But Hannibal softened under Will's mouth, eventually parting his lips and softly threading his hands into Will's hair. When they parted for air, Will pressed little kisses along Hannibal's jaw before looking into his eyes. "I shouldn't have dismissed your fear. I…*fuck* we both could have gone about this better, but I don't need a father or protector, and I needed you to see that. What I need is a partner. Can you do that? Please?"

Hannibal's body tensed. His eyes had that sheen that Will had come to recognize as fear. "Is this a request or an ultimatum, Will?"

Will could see it all playing out in Hannibal's eyes. The terror that Will would leave and more importantly the fear of what he would do should Will leave. Seeing that should have frightened Will, made him leery of the man still in his arms. Instead Will merely kissed Hannibal again.

"I'll never leave you. I'll be by your side forever and kill anyone who tries to take my place. But I won't hunt with you unless we're equals. I'll just sit around the house in ugly t-shirts eating pop rocks." Hannibal smiled, his teeth were stained red. There was so much love lurking behind those wild eyes, but Will needed to know, needed Hannibal to understand. They would be equals in this or nothing at all. "Tell me now, Hannibal. Tell me what you should have told me ages ago."

A fond hand stroked along Will's jaw, thumb rubbing at a smudge of blood. "I love you."

"That's not good enough," Will set his jaw. Hannibal stepped back, but Will wouldn't let him go, not until he saw. "Will you love me enough to respect me and my wishes? Will you love me enough to see me as an equal? Can you do that?"

"'Til death do us part." Hannibal whispered, dropping his hand to link with Will's left. He brought the hand to his lips, kissing the ring finger. "Do you trust that?"

"I want to." Will's voice was shaking. He could feel the adrenaline waning in his system, leaving him with nothing but nerves and pain. "I want to so badly."

Hannibal sighed, dropping Will's hand. The boy immediately reached for it, trying to reinstate the connection, but Hannibal stilled him, stepping back. Will felt his heart lurching in his chest. He couldn't lose this, not when he was so close. "Hannibal, wait-"

Hannibal raised his hand. "No, you have every right to demand some proof – a demonstration of just how deeply I adore you. I thought you might."

Reaching into his pants, Hannibal pulled out a packet, holding it up to the light. Will let out a surprised laugh when he recognized the package – blue raspberry Pop Rocks. Hannibal took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and tore the package open, upending it into his mouth. Will stepped closer so he could listen to the candy crackle and pop in Hannibal's maw as the doctor grimaced. Will relented after thirty seconds, gently shutting Hannibal's mouth with a finger and allowing him to swallow. Hannibal opened his eyes and smiled at Will. "Does that prove my commitment to you?"

Will grabbed Hannibal's jaw and forced it open, grinning at the doctor's blue tongue. "How could I ever doubt blue raspberry?"

"Partners?" Hannibal asked, his voice oddly soft as Will fondly rubbed his jaw.

"How about murder husbands?"

Hannibal recoiled, mouth pursed and eyes narrowed. "Why would we ever call ourselves that?"

"Because I asked you to." Will cocked his head, raising an eyebrow. "And you owe me one."

Hannibal rolled his eyes, but smiled. With a speed that Will was still shocked by, the doctor bent down and grabbed him, lifting the younger man into a bridal carry. "I do."

Will laughed, throwing his arms around Hannibal's neck. He busied himself pressing kisses onto the doctor's neck as he was carried from the barn and through the Verger grounds. Hannibal's grip never wavered as he stepped over bodies and around discarded guns.

When they neared the main gate, Will saw a dark shape waiting for them. He tensed, immediately grabbing for his knife. Hannibal jostled him lightly. "Will, please don't stab our well-wishers."

"Huh?"

Instead of answering, Hannibal lifted his gaze, nodding to the figure. "Good evening, Margot."

Margot acknowledged the pair by raising her hand, then hitting a button at the guard stand that swung the heavy metal gate open. She looked so grown up, bundled in her camel coat. Nodding at Will, she said, "Is he alright?"

"I'm fine, Hannibal just likes being dramatic."

"I saw."

"Did you?" Hannibal tilted his head, adjusting his grip on Will.

"Watched the whole thing before I deleted the tapes." Margot raised an eyebrow. "You should teach a class, looked like great cardio."

Hannibal smiled. “I find swimming is also excellent for cardiovascular health and very rarely runs you afoul of police.”

Margot shook her head. “There won’t be police.”

“I suspected that.”

Will scoffed. “There’s like 50 dead people here.”

Margot smiled. “We’re Vergers, Will, if an unfortunate incident happens on our land, the police trust us to handle it as we see fit. It’s why we give them such large checks every year.”

“Fucking rich people,” Will muttered, scowling when Hannibal jostled him in admonishment.

“Have you told Molson yet?”

“About Mason? No. He knows one of Mason’s toys caused a ruckus, though.” Margot looked down at her gloved hands, fidgeting. “He was quite clear about what would happen if something happened to Mason.”

“Is he going to throw a party?” Will asked. Margot huffed lightly, mouth curling.

“Your father will no doubt be very upset, Margot,” Hannibal had shifted into his therapist voice. “But as you’re the only person now capable of producing a Verger heir, I’m sure he could be persuaded to amend his will in your favor.”

“But Mason-”

“Had a very unfortunate accident, it’s true.” Hannibal paused, looking down as if they all needed a moment of silence to mourn the evil fuck. “But since it was no fault of your own, I think Molson can be reasoned with.”

Margot frowned. “You do?”

“I do.” Hannibal shifted Will again, putting all the boy’s weight on one arm as he reached into his pocket again. He offered Margot a packet of pills. “Give this to Molson tonight. When he wakes in the morning, I’ll come to the house and explain things to him.”

Margot squinted at the pills. “What will you explain?”

“That Mason is dead, and while that tragedy shall weigh heavily upon the Verger household, there is still room to hope. You’ve made excellent progress in therapy and I believe with my guidance you’ll produce a worthy heir to the Verger name, one that Molson can rest comfortably knowing will properly run the businesses and manage your money.”

Margot scoffed. “You think he’ll buy that?”

“No.” Hannibal's mouth ticked into a slight smile. “But I think we can come up with a hallucinogenic cocktail that will encourage him to sign a new will and keep him pliant for a few months... until you find you’re no longer in need of a Verger patriarch.”

Margot smiled, fingers tightening around the pills before slipping them into her pocket. “I’ll see you in the morning, Dr. Lecter.”

“I shall be here at 9.” Hannibal started to walk out the gate, but paused. “Oh, Margot, may I ask one more favor?”

Margot raised her brows. “You want me to have pork delivered to you?”

Hannibal smiled. “No, thank you, I have an excellent butcher.”

Will snorted. Hannibal ignored him.

“I believe when I entered your dining hall, I saw two dogs in a cage. Would it be possible for you to feed them and have them ready for me when I visit in the morning?”

“You want the dogs from the shelter?” Margot's mouth twisted in confusion.

“They’re a wedding gift,” Hannibal explained, gripping Will a little tighter. “My Will always wanted a dog or two.”

Will had to lean on his left side to keep pressure off the gauze pads currently packing the wound in his ass. He found he didn’t mind a bit, as that angled him onto Hannibal’s shoulder.

“I love you,” Will whispered, kissing the stubble on Hannibal's throat. “I can’t believe you got me dogs!”

Hannibal turned, raising an eyebrow. “I thought you might be more excited about the proposal.”

Will scoffed dismissively. “I knew that would happen eventually, but the dogs? That was a surprise. I think I’ll name the golden mutt Winston…maybe Buster for the terrier?”

“I am not living in a home with anything named Buster.”

Will kissed Hannibal’s neck. “We’ll talk about it after you’ve stitched me up.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
So technically...that's the end of the story. But if you stick around for next week, you'll get an epilogue with what these two are doing a few decades later. Think of it as the moment at the end of a slasher movie that sets up a possible sequel.

The Killer Reborn

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will set up the sequel to their slasher movie...

Chapter Notes

I'm a terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad author and have answered exactly zero comments. I'll do that later tonight, but I thought I should probably post the damn chapter since I've committed to the Wednesday posting schedule.
As always, I'd like to throw myself at the feet of Gwilbers, who saves you all from reading the most appalling errors. Thank you so much.
And if you've bothered to read this story, kudos it, bookmark it, or leave a comment - I really can't express how much I adore you all.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will opened the door, smiling when he was greeted with by two sets of tapping paws. Will had found Mickey on the side of the road five years ago and had used the remnants of a lunch Hannibal had packed him to lure the fluffy black mutt into his car. Will had bought Edgar three months ago, pulling the Parsons Russel from a box of puppies at an animal shelter fair and presenting him to Hannibal. Though the doctor had scoffed and frowned at the puppy, he was soon feeding it table scraps and pulling him onto the settee for a cuddle when he thought Will wasn't looking. Hannibal had never really gotten over the loss of Buster a few years ago. The scruffy little terrier had gone from a skinny snarling dog to a chubby little comedian and Hannibal's constant companion. Hannibal had been devastated when Buster died at the ripe old age of 16, but Edgar seemed to be filling the void with his terrier antics.

Stooping down to offer scratches and pets, Will allowed himself to be bowled over by the excited duo. "I know, I know, guys! I managed to get away without Jack or a student holding me hostage. Big day, huh?"

Will froze. He could hear rhythmic chopping in the kitchen.

"Is daddy home?" Will asked, smiling when Edgar fell to the ground in an excited wiggle. "Let's go get him!"

Will followed the furry parade into the kitchen, smiling when he saw Hannibal, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, chopping candied ginger. Will pulled a packet of Pop Rocks out of

his satchel, he made sure to kept a packet on his person for nearly 20 years, just in case he needed to torment his husband. He moved to tear it, but stopped when he heard Hannibal's voice.

"If you try to kiss me with those in your mouth, I will serve your tongue for dinner instead of the royal crown roast."

"You've gotten mean in your old age," Will said, shoving the pop rocks back into his bag. He smiled at the little snarl in Hannibal's lip, already planning to kiss the curl of it. Flopping his satchel in the chair by the kitchen, Will approached his testy love. "You're home early."

"I took the afternoon off. I thought I would prepare a celebratory meal, to welcome our daughter to the family." Hannibal gestured to the mixer on the counter. "Chocolate cake with candied ginger."

"My favorite," Will mused. He leaned down to steal a piece of candied ginger when he caught his reflection on a silver canister. "God, I'm starting to look like a father – grey hair and glasses."

"A few silver strands at your temples," Hannibal dismissed. He paused, raising a hand to adjust the glasses on Will's nose. "And I believe I've made my feelings on your glasses quite clear."

Will smiled, the night Will had walked in with the glasses perched on his nose he hadn't gotten a chance to complain. Hannibal had jumped him in the foyer, falling to his knees and swallowing Will down, eyes lifted to gaze at the younger man's spectacles. Considering all the positions Hannibal had bent him into that night, it was a miracle the glasses weren't snapped in half.

Walking around the island, Will pressed a kiss to Hannibal's jaw, laughing when the knife faltered in Hannibal's hands. "Still works after all these years."

Hannibal grabbed Will's hand and brought it to his chest, Will could feel the rapid rhythm of Hannibal's heart beneath his fingers. "Still quite affected, after all these years."

Will thought back to the first time. He could hear the sound of his knife hitting the leaves, of Hannibal's breath coming out short as the man stuttered backwards. At the time, he had thought Hannibal was surprised, but now after decades in the same bed, learning every expression and sound, Will could see Hannibal's reaction for what it was. He grinned wolfishly. "You dirty old man! You had such a crush on me!"

Hannibal's eyes narrowed. He took the chopped candied ginger to his mixer and scrapped it in. "You kissed me, may I remind you."

"I was but a young impressionable child..." Will threw a hand dramatically to his forehead. Hannibal rolled his eyes and started the mixer. Will moved closer, poking him in the chest. "YOU, however, knew exactly what you were doing."

"Trying to escape, if memory serves."

Will let his head fall on Hannibal's shoulder. The doctor wouldn't look his way, but the fullness of his cheeks meant he was smiling. "Knocked you flat on your ass, didn't I?"

"One of the very few times."

"Oh, you loved it," Will shoved at Hannibal, who kept his eyes on the mixer. Will leaned in forcing himself in front of Hannibal to bat his lashes. "Wide blue eyes, stupid seduction gambits, so young and so impossibly hot for teacher."

Hannibal huffed, taking the bowl from the mixer and dividing the batter into two prepared cake pans. He put both in the oven and programmed a timer before turning to Will, his hands tracing the graying strands of Will's curls. "I prefer silver at the temples, wide blue eyes, and impossible in general."

Will cocked his head, bumping into Hannibal with his hip. "Still hot for teacher, though."

Hannibal stroked a fond hand along the scruff on Will's chin. "And for that, I am thankful."

Will grinned, large and toothy. He waggled his eyebrows. "How thankful?"

Will flexed his fingers on Hannibal's hips as he thrust. He had the doctor bent over the kitchen counter, which was elicit enough in a household where Hannibal frowned upon sitting on them, but the soft noises he pulled from his husband with each roll of his hips had Will nearing the edge at a breakneck pace.

"*Fuck* fuck FUCK," Will dug his nails into Hannibal's flesh, heat building in the base of his spine when the doctor hissed. "So, fucking perfect for me."

Hannibal arched his back, hands pressing onto the counter. "Harder, *please ah*…Will!"

Will let himself fall forward, his hips picking up a brutal pace as he blanketed Hannibal's back. He took Hannibal's shoulder in his teeth, biting hard enough to mark - just to hear his husband let out a throaty moan.

"That's it, let me hear it, Hannibal." Will moved his right hand to Hannibal's face. "Lick it."

Will shuddered, his balls drawing tight when Hannibal lapped at his palm. This wasn't going to last much longer. Wrapping his wet fingers around Hannibal's cock, he began pumping, biting a few more times at the doctor's back before Will whispered. "Come on, Hannibal. I want to see you fuck up your pristine fucking cabinets. *Fuck*, come on, love, make a mess for me."

Hannibal groaned, back arching as he fucked Will's hand. It only took a few strokes before his fluid motions stuttered and he came all over his newly refinished cabinets. Will had done the work himself for their 15th anniversary, so he didn't feel too bad about the abuse. As Hannibal quivered beneath him Will thrust as deep as he could, pinning the doctor to the cabinet as he filled him.

"God, I love you," Will whispered into Hannibal's neck, nuzzling the soft skin he found there and breathing in the scent of rosemary and sandalwood. Will was about to bite into that soft join of flesh when the kitchen timer trilled. "YES! I told you I could do it! Two orgasms in under 45 minutes!"

Hannibal leveled an unimpressed glare at Will as he pulled up his pants. "I've asked you repeatedly not to fist pump after we make love like it's some sort of sporting event."

"Oh, go get your damn cake," Will leaned against the counter, grinning. As Hannibal pulled the cakes from the oven, Will righted his own clothes and picked Hannibal's shirt off the ground. Grabbing some paper towels and a few Lysol wipes, Will cleaned away the mess Hannibal had made of their cabinets. He watched Hannibal pull the tins off the cakes, before wrapping his arms around the man's waist and kissing his shoulder. "We're going to have to stop doing this once our daughter arrives."

Hannibal straightened in Will's arms, but the empath noted he did nothing to remove himself from the embrace.

"As you may recall, I objected to this practice for sanitation reasons," Hannibal said primly.

"Oh, is *that* what all that moaning was?" Will hid his laugh in Hannibal's shoulder. He peeked around Hannibal's back to offer the doctor an innocent face. "So sorry, guess I couldn't make it out. Sounded like *harder* to me."

"If we're to be successful parents, you must stop undermining me," Hannibal admonished.

"When do I ever?"

"As parents, we will need to present a united front to our child." Hannibal's Dr. Lecter voice was coming out and Will tried not to roll his eyes. "If not, she'll soon learn to manipulate us by playing one against the other."

Will huffed, releasing Hannibal to grab the cake pans and wash them in the sink. "OK, but what if you're wrong?"

Hannibal leaned against the counter to watch Will. The late afternoon light caught the bramble of silvering hair along Hannibal's chest and Will wished he was still 18 so he could drag his husband onto the kitchen floor and ravish him again. Hannibal caught the trajectory of Will's stare and smiled softly, puffing his chest out.

“One day, I may be wrong.” Hannibal allowed magnanimously. Will leveled his best *bullshit* expression at Hannibal, who continued, unbothered. “But until that happens, I believe a united front is the best option.”

Will let the cake pan fall into the sudsy water. He lifted his hand in an approximation of the Boy Scouts’ oath. “I promise to support you no matter what, and only roll my eyes when you’re not looking.”

“This is no way to raise a child, Will.” Hannibal frowned when Will flicked suds on his stomach before he resumed washing.

“You’re just mad that I’m going to be the cool dad!”

Hannibal wiped the water from his stomach, tossing his head haughtily. “Fine, win her over with Pop Rocks and sarcasm, but we’ll see who she comes to when someone breaks her heart and she needs a body buried.”

Will put the pans in the drying rack and moved to cage Hannibal against the counter with his arms. He pressed a kiss over his husband’s heart.

“You’ll teach her all the best ways to survive and thrive. All the best ways to enjoy life – from food to clothing to music.” Will stroked Hannibal’s chest, dotting a few more kisses along his collarbone before looking up. “She’d be a fool not to favor you, Hannibal.”

The doctor preened just a bit before dipping to catch Will’s mouth for a tender kiss. When they parted, Hannibal’s bloody eyes were soft. “My Will.”

Will laughed, pushing away from the counter. “Christ, if you’re this easy to manipulate, we ARE in trouble.”

Will could feel the weight of Hannibal’s glare on his back as he grabbed the rest of their discarded clothing and headed to the door. He paused looking over his shoulder at Hannibal and raising an eyebrow. “Yeah, yeah, yeah – come on old man, we’ve got to clean up before we meet our girl. You can spank me for my insolence in the shower.”

Hannibal smiled and followed Will out of the room without another argument.

“Can I ask you something?” Will’s fingers drummed on the steering wheel as I-80 flew by them. Hannibal sat beside him, the chocolate ginger cake neatly boxed and resting upon his lap for safety’s sake.

“You just did.”

Will chanced a flat glare at Hannibal. “This is going to be a long fucking drive if you keep this up.”

Hannibal smiled. “Shall I break out the Pop Rocks? Perhaps a round or two of I-Spy?”

“I’m going to divorce you the second I stop to get gas.”

“I shall live in fear.” Hannibal ran his hand up Will’s thigh, squeezing affectionately. “What was your question?”

“Why a daughter and not a son?”

“Practical and impractical reasons. Practically, a woman will never age out of our… hobby. Gray hair and a more mature face may have left you fewer prospects, but men are taught that they can victimize women with little to no consequences throughout their lives.” Hannibal tilted his head to look out the window speculatively. “And she will make each of them pay with blood.”

“Jesus Christ you’re dark,” Will muttered. “What was the impractical reason?”

“We already have a boy to dote upon.”

Will grinned, letting his hand fall to link with Hannibal’s. Malcolm Verger was born just three years after Molson Verger changed his will. Hannibal had introduced Margot to a fertility specialist and spent hours going over the physiological and psychological profiles of donors with her. When the embryos were ready for implanting, Will had held Margot’s hand while Hannibal and the doctor found the best male embryo that would fulfill the clause in Molson’s new will.

The Verger patriarch lived long enough to hold Malcolm Verger once, for a formal portrait that Margot made sure hung prominently both in the Verger LLC offices and the Verger Estate. The day after Margot received the photo proofs, Molson died. The coroner had said the death was peaceful, but Will had to wonder considering all the flailing the man did as Margot held the pillow to his face. Hannibal had arranged the body and given Margot a stiff drink while Will cooed at the baby. The doctor had insisted it would do Margot good to kill Molson herself, and Will had to admit she seemed lighter and brighter since that night. The pillow she used was taken to Margot’s room that night and left there, she told Will she slept better on it than any of her expensive bedding.

Margot had asked both Will and Hannibal to be the godparents to her son and they had taken their roles quite seriously. Will took Mal fishing for long weekends on the Chesapeake Bay and helped him train the pack of dogs Margot allowed to romp through the Verger Estate. Will had also helped Margot tear down Mason’s barn, refurbishing the building into an indoor/outdoor pool where Hannibal and Malcom raced on lazy Saturdays. For his part, Hannibal had singlehandedly dragged his godson through advanced calculus, spending long nights writing out formulas and painstakingly grading practice quizzes. Mal had also taken a shine to Hannibal’s skills in the kitchen. Both Margot and Will had tensed when Hannibal first handed the seven-year-old a knife, but Mal had listened solemnly to the doctor’s instructions, carefully slicing a potato with his tongue clenched between his teeth in concentration as Hannibal guided his hands. Now, Hannibal and Mal frequently worked together to make the elaborate family dinners they sat down to once a month.

“He’s going to college in two years,” Will knew he sounded morose, but he didn’t care.

“I’m sure he’ll apply to Hopkins, and if he goes, he’ll be closer than ever.” Hannibal squeezed Will’s hand. “We may even lure Margot to the city more often. Perhaps she’ll bring that green-eyed stable manager she’s been…seeing.”

“I would like to meet her properly.” Hannibal and Will had quite accidentally made a traumatic impression on Margot’s latest girlfriend. And while they could both describe the thigh tattoo she had in great detail, as it had been wrapped around Margot’s head in the stable office, neither had actually spoken to her beyond mortified apologies.

“Let’s just be grateful she got rid of Alana before things got serious.”

“Fair enough.” Will laughed. “Should I get a thigh tattoo?”

“Yes, please, something on your inner thigh. I spend so much time there, it would be nice to have some reading material. Perhaps a few lines from Dante to stave off boredom?”

“Hannibal, are you going to be this exhausting the whole drive?”

“I haven’t decided yet.”

Will freed his hand from Hannibal’s, flicking the side of the box just to watch his husband scowl and wrap a protective arm around his cake.

“I told you he’d choose five,” Hannibal whispered from their perch in the oak.

“*I told you he’d choose five*,” Will mimicked back earning him a snarl from the man beside him. Caleb Johnson had a fairly predictable pattern that Will had pointed out when Jack had handed him a file to peruse with his husband. Four or five girls, all from broken homes or foster facilities, would go missing on a blue moon. Caleb was always in the area, but they could never make it stick. “He only had four files.”

Last week, when Hannibal and Will had taken a drive to Caleb’s home, they’d found an old hunting shed half buried by brush at the far end of his property. A few bloodstained women’s shirts and a map of Wolsfeld Woods were fairly damning evidence that Caleb might know where all the missing women were. They’d found files – four girls, four sets of photos of them talking with friends, walking home from school, changing by an open window. Will had taken pictures of the research while Hannibal had installed a GPS tracker on Caleb’s car.

“A man like Caleb would enjoy an impulsive selection as well as a planned one.” Hannibal pointed at a redheaded girl whimpering at the far end of Caleb’s campfire. “Look at her shirt, she was probably walking home from a shift when he grabbed her to join the others.”

Will nodded. They had watched Caleb drag each girl to a remote clearing in Wolsfeld Woods, tying them to stakes he had already planted in the ground. When the moon shone directly above the circle of women, he’d slit all their throats and bleed them dry. Will had a

theory that he kept the blood, bathed in it to regain lost strength. Hannibal, unhelpfully, pointed out that blood was an excellent thickener – as long as the chef was careful not to allow it to congeal.

Caleb was busy tying the last girl to a stake when Will tensed, ready to move. Hannibal's hand on his shoulder stopped him.

"We need to see who has the necessary skills."

"We agreed none of them will die." Will warned. The plan, as outlined by Will was to find the girl they thought would fit into the family, kill Caleb, and set the rest free. If for any reason their chosen daughter didn't want to join the family Hannibal and Will would simply release her and never bother her again. Hannibal assured Will it would be easy, that they'd know when they saw their daughter.

"And they won't, Caleb has no reason to kill them for at least 30 minutes until the moon as at the appropriate zenith. Until then, I'd like to observe them."

Will nodded. He didn't like leaving the girls to tremble and cry, but Hannibal was right, it wouldn't do to try and adopt a girl not suited for their hobby.

Will and Hannibal watched as Caleb kneeled in the center of the women, stripping off his shirt and slashing at his scarred chest. The redhead and two brunettes begged him to let them go. One girl shook uncontrollably, her face stoic even as tears fell – she reminded Will a bit of Margot. The blonde scoffed, yelling that Caleb should cover his ugly tits.

"I think we have a winner," Will whispered.

"We do, but not the one you're looking at." Hannibal's mouth curved slightly, that smug smile that made Will want to punch him and then make out.

"Are you kidding me? It's gotta be blondie." Will's brow furrowed. "Look at the mouth she has on her."

Hannibal shook his head. "She's brave, but she has no plan other than provocation. That will get her killed."

"Then who, oh murder master?"

Hannibal raised an eyebrow at the name, and Will had a terrible feeling he'd just given Hannibal a moniker he rather enjoyed. "The brunette with the blue eyes."

Will squinted, then look skeptically back at Hannibal. "Her? She's shaking! No way."

"All that trembling has loosened her bonds." Hannibal raised his chin at her again. "She also has a hunting knife hidden on her, which is a tremendously interesting development."

"What?"

“Look at her left boot.”

Will took a closer look at the girl, and the lump hidden by knee-high leather on her calf. Will cocked his head when the girl’s hands slipped free of her bonds, but instead of bolting she waited. When Caleb looked away, the girl quickly pulled her knife from her boot and hid her hand back behind her, waiting for a chance to strike. “I’ll be damned…What was her name?”

“That, I believe, is Ms. Hobbs.”

Will smiled, pulling his bone knife from his sheath and admiring Mischa’s beauty in the moonlight. He stole a kiss from Hannibal, both of them readying to pounce. “Welcome to the family, Abigail.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Up:
Fhime sent me a lovely prompt that I proceeded to make a cracky mess. Let's see how that goes, shall we? Hopefully I'll see some of you all there next Wednesday!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!